Identifying Possible Guidelines for Addressing the Unexpected Death of a Coworker in an Academic Workplace

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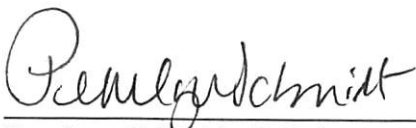
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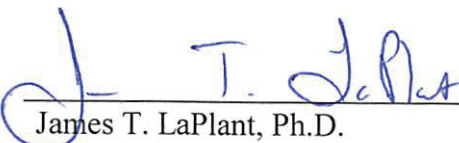Associate Professor of Social Work

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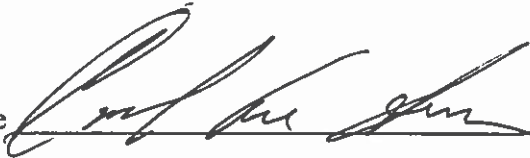
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ABSTRACT

Although grief in the workplace has been researched, only two studies concerning the experiences of employees following the death of a coworker in an academic workplace have been published. Academia presents unique challenges when an employee dies unexpectedly because the institution must continue to function for the students, and the deceased employee's duties must be assumed by highly-qualified individuals, frequently by grieving coworkers. To better understand the experiences of those left to carry on after the death of a coworker, a study of discovery was designed utilizing grounded theory. Twenty participants, 10 from Valdosta State University and 10 from Darton State College, completed a written survey consisting of five open-ended questions, and four follow-up questions related to the death of a coworker in an academic environment. Consistent themes between the two institutions emerged related to notification preference via phone or in person, responsibility for notification, faculty feeling honored to cover the descendant's class, the greater difficulty of assuming upper administration duties, and the crucialness of upper administration response because of potentially lasting negative impression for years if handled badly. Evidence emerged that different responses are owed for the loss of a coworker to traumatic death than to natural causes. Further research is needed, especially related to traumatic loss, but the preliminary findings can be used to craft basic policy and procedure in anticipation of future deaths. Decisions may be made ahead of time related to manner of notification, designated notifiers, policies related to funeral attendance and memorials, training related to grief, cooperative agreements with adjacent institutions concerning the use of adjuncts, and the role upper administration will play when there is a loss.

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of Richard E. Ham, Linda Ham, and Keith Russ. Onward, into the fog!

"*Whenever we experience a change we lose what we changed from.*" (Jeffreys, 2005, p.

24)

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background

At some point in time, most people will have to deal with the loss of a loved one.

When this happens, they must cope with the changes in their life brought about by the

death, while also experiencing the grief related to their loss. The grief response is a

reaction to loss that includes psychological, physical, social, and behavioral losses

(McGuinnessc, 2007; Rando, 1993; Thompson, 2009). How grief is experienced is

unique to the individual and can change over time. The phrase, "Everyone grieves in their

own way" is accurate and has a great deal to do with an individual's perceptions and

cultural context (Rando, 1993).

Grief is an ongoing process that does not have a timetable, which means that

many individuals have to learn to cope with their grief while continuing to work.

Unbeknownst to many, grief has become a common presence in the workplace (Davis,

2014; Jeffrey, 2005; Joseph, 2001; McKenzie, 2014). In the United States, it is common

for employees to have 3 to 5 days off when they have experienced a personal loss

(Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; Yost, 2013). However, this time limit in no way reflects

how much time it takes for an individual to deal with grief (Charles-Edwards, 2005;

McKenzie, 2014; Rando, 1993). When those who have experienced loss return to work, they are just beginning to grieve and will continue to grieve for some time to come.

Numerous studies have shown that when an employee experiences grief in any form, work productivity goes down, concentration is impaired, on-the-job errors increase, use of sick leave goes up, and consumption of drugs and alcohol increases. Additionally, employees who are grieving are more likely to change jobs (Charles-Edwards, 2005; Jeffreys, 2005; O'Connor, Watts, Bloomer, & Larkins, 2010; Pawlecki, 2010; Pyrillis, 2016; Silberman, Kendall, Price, & Rice, 2006; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001; Thompson, 2009). Until recently, there was scant research related to grief in the workplace. Emerging literature has explored the experiences of a grieving employee (Bauer, 2012; Charles-Edwards, 2005; Hazen, 2008; Jeffreys, 2005; Pyrillis, 2016), the potential effects of work on an employee dealing with grief (Davis, 2014; Frost, 2011; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; McKenzie, 2014; Pawlecki, 2010; Wolfelt, 2005), and possible consequences when grief is not addressed (Cheung, Chan, & Yap, 2016; Eyetsemitan, 1998; Stein & Cropanzano, 2011; Tehan & Thompson, 2012; Walter, 2009).

Some organizations have developed guidelines or policies and procedures to accommodate employees experiencing the grief process while also continuing to work. (Beder, 2004; Charles-Edwards, 2005; Hazen, 2008; Turner, 2012). Few of these guidelines are specific to addressing grief in the workplace when an employee dies. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM, 1996) is one exception with its *Manager's Handbook: Traumatic Events*, which covers different types of workplace trauma and includes a three-page chapter, "Recovering from the Death of a Coworker." More typical are the guidelines published by organizations like hospice (McGuinness, 2007; Turner,

2012) or various human resources (Fox, 2012; Hall, Shucksmith, & Russell, 2013; Kessler, Heron, & Dopson, 2012; Liberty Mutual, 2012), which are not specific to employee death, but more generalized to grief in the workplace. Others are very specific to a specific worksite, such as the guide produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2013), which is over 100 pages long. Some professions, such as the military, law enforcement, and fire departments have guidelines and checklists governing procedures before, during, and after the death of an employee. Training support staff such as social workers and chaplains best practices when notifying family and coworkers of a death are among the policies in place before the loss occurs (Stewart, Lord, & Mercer, 2000). At the time of death, there are processes regarding who is responsible for handling specific tasks, such as dealing with the media, cleaning out the decedent's office, and reassigning the duties once handled by the decedent (Clements, DeRanieri, Fay-Hillier, & Henry, 2003; Matthews, Quinlan, Rawlings-Way, & Bohle, 2011). There are also processes for creating support groups for bereaved employees, arranging memorials, and meeting the needs of those struggling with the loss (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; Hall et al., 2013; McGuinness, 2007; Turner, 2012). These processes are followed by assessing the effectiveness of the responses to the loss, and identifying changes to the policy as a result (U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, 2013). The majority of these checklists, guidelines, and policies are related to professions where death on the job is not an unlikely occurrence and are specific to the particular job. Therefore, they are not appropriate as a basis for broad application. Some studies have questioned the validity of formalized grief response guidelines (Frost, 2011). For example, a policy that stipulates

that upper management must attend an employee's funeral can be viewed as positive by some and as disingenuous and forced by others (Hallin & Gustavsson, 2009).

Academia has not developed a body of literature on best practices regarding the unexpected death of an employee. The challenge is compounded in academia because accrediting guidelines require stringent adherence to credentialing policy, so not just anyone can step in and replace the person who died. Additionally, the duties of the decedent frequently fall to the individuals who are the most deeply impacted by the loss of a colleague, who quite often was also a friend. The University of Berkeley has the most completely researched and organized response to a death in the academic environment (Hoffman & Goya, 2006). Interestingly, they have developed an algorithm to predict the anticipated death rate of employees and students each year. Their policy and procedure outline preparedness for and response to such losses. Much can be learned from Berkeley, but it is difficult to generalize their policies to other institutions. For instance, institutions in southern Georgia are different in size, mission, administrative structure, and culture from those in north central California.

The University System of Georgia (USG; Human Resources, 2014) does not have guidelines, policy, or procedures on how to respond to the death of an employee, beyond handling death benefits. However, like other worksites, the colleges and universities in the USG confront the unexpected death of employees on a regular basis. In recent years, employees have died unexpectedly at Darton State College and Valdosta State University, and each institution responded to these losses based on what had been done in the past or someone's best judgment at the time. There is no way of knowing how

faculty, staff, and administrators responded to those deaths, how decisions were made, and the impact of responses on the function of those institutions.

<center>The Problem</center>

This study focuses on the unexpected death of an employee in an academic environment. Academia presents with some unique features that make it different from other kinds of employment. Colleges and universities cannot stop operations when a death occurs because students are working towards matriculation. These institutions must adhere to a timetable, and failure to do so could delay graduation, sitting for board exams, or transferring to other institutions. The need to continue operating as normal is problematic because many positions in academia are held by individuals with very specific qualifications. If a physics professor dies during a semester, that person must be replaced immediately by someone who meets the accrediting body's requirements for physics. As has been seen in the overview of grief in the workplace, the loss of a coworker leaves a gap in the department and the role must be filled by grieving coworkers. These coworkers may not get the opportunity to process the loss before assuming the deceased person's duties.

What happens when an employee of a college or a university is lost? What are the experiences of the faculty, staff, and administrators who are responsible for keeping the institution running while dealing with the loss of a colleague and possibly a friend? How are decisions made? Do they come from upper administration or are they left to the department and division heads? Are these even the issues of greatest concern when there is a loss or are there even more pressing concerns academic organizations are not aware?

<center>5</center>

The only way to answer these questions and discover confounding issues is through research and the analysis of data.

Research Questions

This dissertation was not a program evaluation because USG has no prescribed program to dictate the response to employee deaths in the academic workplace. This study was a project of discovery, exploring the experiences of faculty, staff, and administrators after a coworker died. Their answers revealed some themes and patterns used as the basis for proposed guidelines that address such losses in the future.

Any guideline for addressing loss in the academic workplace needs to be based on empirical evidence. As the Introduction shows, studies have been published related to workplace loss, but the literature is uneven and much is unique to specific types of work environments. First, these limits demonstrate a gap in the literature. Currently, only two articles address employee loss in the academic environment: Hoffman and Goya (2006), on UC-Berkeley; University of South Australia (2017), where the system of higher education is very different from the United States. Second, other professions have recognized that they have unique issues relative to their distinct environments that require tailored responses to loss in their specific workplaces. There is room for further exploration of this topic.

Because this is a project of discovery, grounded theory was used because it does not start out with a hypothesis but with questions (Jones & Alony, 2011; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The participants for this study consisted of members of the faculty, staff, and administration at Darton State College and Valdosta State University. They were asked to respond to four open-ended questions about their

experiences after the death of a coworker in the academic environment. The responses were reviewed and then imported into Nvivo 11, qualitative data analysis software, for coding, which revealed patterns and themes. New questions also may have emerged from the data analysis, which is how grounded theory builds on itself through an ongoing process of discovery (McNabb, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The methodology dictated that the questions were open ended, to enable the researcher to understand the experiences participants had when they dealt with the unexpected death of a coworker. Because grounded theory amends and augments the original line of questions, there were opportunities to follow up with participants or add additional questions as the data guided the process.

The Questions

For faculty and staff

1. Please discuss the coworker deaths you have experienced in the academic workplace.
2. How did the institution respond when there was an unexpected death of a coworker? And how did you react to their response?
3. How did the unexpected death affect decision-making and productivity in the workplace?
4. Looking back, what do you wish had been done differently?
5. Anything you would like to add?
6. Open for follow-up question.

For administrators

1. Please discuss the employee deaths you have experienced in the academic workplace as an administrator.

2. How did you respond when there was an unexpected death of an employee? And how did your employees respond?

3. How did the unexpected death affect decision-making and productivity in the workplace?

4. Looking back, what do you wish had been done differently?

5. Anything you would like to add?

6. Open for follow up question

Definition of Terms

The death of a person is a loss. Loss can be physical or psychological and quite frequently both (Rando, 1993). The deceased's coworkers and supervisor must address the losses related to the death of their colleague, both the physical loss of the employee but also the tangible loss of the knowledge and expertise the person contributed to the workplace. Then there is the psychological loss as related to the coworkers who shared personal moments and friendships with the deceased but also the psychological loss of what that person contributed as part of a team or as a colleague (Lynn, 2008). Stroebe and Schutt (1999) took this idea further in their dual process model of grief, pointing out there are both psychological and emotional grief matters to deal with along with psychological and social restoration matters related to moving forward.

When a loss occurs, it is natural for those associated with the deceased to experience grief, which is a reaction to loss that can include psychological, physical,

social, and behavioral responses (McGuinness, 2007; Rando, 1993; Thompson, 2009).

Any type of change can bring grief, whether it is due to a workplace death, retirement,

downsizing, merger, or company reorganization (Jeffreys, 2005, p. 23). *Grief* and

bereavement are the terms that are used interchangeably the most. Bereavement is

differentiated from grief because it is the "state of having suffered a loss" (Rando, 1993,

p. 20) and "adapting to a loss incurred through death" (Charles-Edwards, 2005, p. 4). A

person can be bereaved (having suffered a loss) and grieving (responding to that loss) at

the same time. Grief has no standard timetable; it can last for weeks to years and go

through an ebb and flow of intensity (McGuinness, 2007, p. 17; Turner, 2012).

Mourning is more problematic to define because it has multiple meanings. Many

people define mourning in a cultural context, which may include an assigned period of

mourning or specific attire worn referred to as "mourning clothing" and these are dictated

by a person's culture or societal norms (Charles-Edwards, 2005). However, in clinical

terms, mourning is the "intrapsychic work" regarding the loss of a loved one (Rando,

1993, p. 23). Thus, mourning becomes a process of experiencing the pain of loss, untying

the bonds to the deceased person, adapting to the loss, and finally learning to live without

the loved one (Charles-Edwards, 2009; McGuinness, 2007; Rando, 1993, p. 23).

Another term that is used inaccurately is *trauma*, which is frequently applied to

anything that is upsetting. However, *traumatic loss* has a very narrow application when

referring to death. "Traumatic loss refers to a situation where an individual is faced with

the loss of one or several close family members or friends that occurred accidentally or in

the context of war, homicide, suicide, or other situations of violence" (Smid et al., 2015,

p. 1). Currier, Holland, and Neimeyer (2006) simply stated that traumatic loss is the result of "one of three causes: suicide, homicide, or a fatal accident" (p. 405).

The manner of loss makes a difference. Death can be classified under five subcategories: "Natural, accidental, homicide, suicide, and undetermined" (DeRanieri, Clements, & Henry 2002, p. 32). Having a coworker die while sleeping is usually considered less upsetting than having a coworker killed in a workplace accident, witnessed by other employees. Traumatic loss, such as the latter scenario, can bring about even deeper reactions by employees including posttraumatic stress disorder, in which case professional intervention must take place to help the employee handle the trauma and the loss (DeRanieri et al., 2002; Fox, 2005).

Procedures/Methodology: An Overview

This was a qualitative study, with as many participants as needed to reach saturation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Mason, 2010). According to Mason (2010), the most common sample for qualitative doctoral projects consists of 20 or 30 people (p. 13). The participants consisted of faculty, staff, and administrators from Darton State College and Valdosta State University.

The initial sample was recruited via email from those who already knew about the study from the researcher, some of whom had expressed a desire to participate in the research. They received an introductory letter, a copy of the informed consent, a copy of the questions, and a link to the survey in Qualtrics (Appendix A). Subsequent participants were recruited from the referrals made by the initial participants.

The survey begins with four demographic questions concerning gender, duration of employment in academia, length of time since the most resent coworker death, role at

the institution, and number assigned in the recruiting letter. Included is a statement requesting possible referrals to the research project and three blanks where they could list the email addresses of those they believe might be willing to participate in the survey. Those individuals were emailed with the same information as the initial participants. The final demographic question ask if the participants are faculty/staff or administration. That answer determines which set of open-ended questions they were given to complete. After the researcher read and coded the participants' responses, if questions materialized, the researcher contacted those participants through email and asked them to provide more information by revisiting the survey and completing the additional question blank where participants could return to the survey and provide further information

The protocol for analysis was to download the responses, code the participants by their assigned number, review the responses, make notes, import the transcripts into Nvivo 11, identify themes and patterns, and formulate follow up questions based on the initial analysis, which is standard for grounded theory. Data were collected through Qualtrics, a survey mechanism on the Valdosta State website.

Significance

Grief is a shared experience, and this study allowed participants to share what they may not have had an opportunity to express in the past (Sunoo & Solomon, 2001). The participants knew from the letter that their answers could help increase the understanding of the experience of the death of a coworker in the academic workplace. Their answers could help to formulate guidelines to prepare for and handle an unexpected death of a coworker or employee. This was a foundation study. From what is learned, further researcher could be done to identify possible policies and procedures related to an

unexpected coworker or employee death in an academic setting, as well as trainings for human resource departments and middle managers to adequately prepare them.

Limitations of the Study

Because no guidelines or programs are currently in place at either institution (Human Resources, 2014), the researcher had to determine the most appropriate closed-ended questions for the survey. The open-ended questions with a follow up for clarification presented as the most appropriate methodology.

Another limitation concerns the location of the research, two institutions in the University System of Georgia, in southern Georgia. The loss of a physics professor at a smaller institution, where there may only be one physics professor, might not generate the same experience at a much larger, research institution with substantially more resources. Darton State College is in a rural environment and does not offer master's or doctoral degrees. Valdosta State University is larger, in a less rural environment, and offers master's and doctoral degrees. Each institution had unique issues based on location, mission, and size.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 includes a literature review consisting of an overview of the statistics related to death, grief, the dual process model, loss in various types of organizations, how loss is addressed, the application of the dual process model to institutional loss, the impact of disenfranchised grief, policies related to addressing loss, the experience of notifiers, issues unique to managers or supervisors, current interventions and their limitations, recommendations, and what is needed.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used in the study and includes the proposed open-ended questions, rationale for using grounded theory, controlling for researcher bias, an overview of the research settings, a brief profile of the research participants, and methods used for coding the data and identifying the initial themes and patterns in the narrative.

Chapter 4 consists of a review and inductive analysis of the data, including finalizing and analyzing the themes and patterns in the responses from the surveys, examining the narratives of those who have experienced a workplace loss, and proposing theory as it emerges from the research analysis.

Chapter 5 draws conclusions and proposes general guidelines for addressing workplace loss. The limitations of the study are discussed, including the uniqueness of the institutions included in the study, and the challenges of applying the research outside of the University System of Georgia. There are also suggestions for expanding this research based on what was learned in this foundation study.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Life changes fast. Life changes in the instance. You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends" (Didion, 2005, p. 3). Those are the opening lines to Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*. She brilliantly summarizes the experience that all people have when they suffer any type of major loss; it happens quickly and unexpectedly. A redefinition of normal is needed when someone dies. People have to adjust to their lives without the deceased. A redefinition of normal and adjusting to life without the deceased is not exclusive to private lives but also when a loss occurs in the workplace.

Death Is a Fact of Life

In 2014 the National Vital Statistics Report (NVSR) reported that 2,626,418 people had died in the United States (Kochanek, Murphy, Xu, & Tejada-Vera, 2016, p. 1). The Census Bureau estimated that the population in the United States that year was approximately 318,748,000 (Colby & Ortman, 2015, p. 6). If four people per loss were affected by those deaths in 2014 that would mean that approximately 30% of the population was dealing with grief related issues in 2014. Four is a very conservative estimate.

The NVSR report indicated that 662,103 of those who died in 2014 were between the ages of 24 and 64 (Kochanek et al., 2016, p. 26). Although not all of the individuals may have been employed at the time of their deaths, 24 to 64 is considered prime working age (Kochanek et al., 2016, p. 26). If only 500,000 of the decedents were

employed at the time of their deaths and they had 10 coworkers on average, then 5,000,000 people would have been impacted by the death of a coworker in 2014. If the individual worked in a place like a university, that loss could be felt by over a 100 individuals. A professor, teaching five undergraduate classes, with an enrollment of 25 students in each would leave behind 125 students, as well as numerous advisees, colleagues, family, and friends if the professor died during a semester.

An organization is similar to a family unit. Many people spend more time at work than they do with their families (Holland, 2010). Often employees have personal relationships with their coworkers outside of work and therefore they experience two losses, that of a colleague and also of a friend. "Losing a close coworker is like losing a family member" (Salmore, 2012, p. 50). It can be a distressing time (Charles-Edwards, 2005; Payne, 2017).

There is a "normal emotional response" and grief associated with the loss of "relationships, attachments, expectations, and obligations" when a coworker dies. (Jakoby, 2012, p. 680). Thompson (2009) indicated that "the interpersonal, structural, and cultural nature of the workplace makes trauma a social occurrence" (p. 31). Hazen (2008) pointed out that grief has "interpersonal and social" aspects (p. 84). Therefore, how an organization responds during a time of loss has a significant impact on how the employees and the organization recover (Perreault, 2011; Thompson, 2009; Yost, 2013). It is imperative for organizations to examine their workplace culture to prepare for times when they will have to handle workplace loss and the shared grief of employees (Jakoby, 2012; Payne, 2017; Perreault, 2011; Vivona & Ty, 2011).
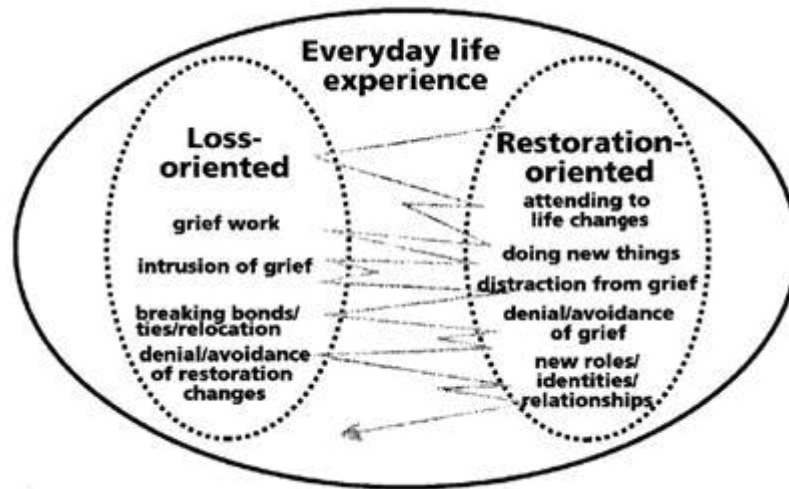
Figure 1. Dual process model of coping with bereavement (Stroebe & Schut, 1999)

Dual Process Model

The death of an employee is an upsetting experience for the coworkers. It is not realistic for upper management to expect that the surviving employees will have an uncomplicated journey through the well-established Kubler-Ross stages of grief, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance and return to pre-loss functioning in a short period of time (Rando, 1993; Roos, 2012; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001). Grief is not a neat and tidy process consisting of set stages and time frames (Topper, 2008). Rando (1993) pointed out that several common myths are associated with grief and mourning, including, "Grief and mourning decline in a steadily decreasing fashion over time…Grief will affect the mourner psychologically but will not interfere in other ways…Mourning is over in a year" (p. 27). These myths actually can be harmful if the mourner or people around them believe the myths and use those myths as a measure of a person's grief process (Rando 1993, p. 28). Grief is not linear.

Stroebe and Schut (1999) rejected the concept of the grief process or grief work and found that the standard models for grief work were primarily based on the medical

model and contained an arbitrary definition of "healthy grieving" that was not supported

by empirical evidence (p. 203). These models are also culturally exclusive and do not

adequately represent how men experience grief (Stroebe & Schut, 1999, pp. 203–204).

Instead, Stroebe and Schut identified two stressors associated with grief—loss-oriented

stressors and restoration-associated stressors. People do not work through these stressors

but instead oscillate between the two (see Figure 1).

Loss-oriented stressors come from focusing on the deceased and the relationship

with that person (Stroebe & Schut 1999, p. 212; 2010, p. 277). Restoration-oriented

stressors are "the secondary loss consequences" a person experiences (Stroebe & Schut

1999, p. 214; 2010, p. 277), which in the workplace include the knowledge and expertise

the person contributed, as well as the actual work the individual completed on a daily

basis, which still must be completed. Surviving coworkers oscillate between grief and

restoration. At times, people will move away from the grief and towards restoration,

which allows them to experience a respite from the grief (Charles-Edwards, 2005;

McKenzie, 2014; Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Thompson, 2009).

In the workplace, employees vacillate between experiencing grief and an inability

to properly focus on work, to focusing on the restorative processes of how the workplace

needs to adjust in the absence of the person who died (Vivona & Ty, 2011; Yost, 2013).

Without mentioning the dual process model (DPM), Sabadash (2005) illustrated this

point by stating, "Because grief comes in waves it can cause work production to be

inconsistent and may require oversight for quality control" (p. 222). Organizations do not

fully understand the oscillation between loss and restoration and that they need to

anticipate a vacillation in functioning as employees address their grief. It takes time for

employees to relearn "the world" without their coworker in it (DeRanieri et al., 2002, p. 32).

Grief in the Workplace

Many organizations are ill-prepared for the loss of an employee. They do not know how to deal with the loss-oriented stressors associated with grief. They are unprepared for restoration-oriented stressors the entire organization will experience as work needs to go on despite the death of an employee (Perreault, 2011; Thompson, 2009; Vivona & Ty, 2011). Responding incorrectly can have far reaching consequences.

> Employees may not remember all of the baby showers, birthdays or other life
> events of coworkers, but they can relay as if it were yesterday what the employer
> did or did not do when someone died. The response to death does not seem to
> leave the institutional memory. (Hoffman & Goya 2006, p. 170)

Organizations are in the business of business and do not respond well to issues related to employee emotion. Many places pride themselves in being "rational, productive, and controlled environments" (Bauer, 2012, p. 42). As a result, after a workplace loss, most institutions do not know how to respond to that loss on multiple levels. Sabadash (2005) pointed out that many organizations have wellness programs to address things like smoking cessation, diet, and exercise but grief is never included in those programs, sending the message that grief is to be handled alone (p. 220). Grief is not an illness or something to be fixed (Hazen, 2008). It is also something that does not remit once the funeral is over. Quite frequently, only weeks or months after the initial loss do people begin experiencing grief that comes in waves, often with feelings stronger than the initial loss (Bauer, 2012; McGuinness, 2007; Rando, 1993; Sabadash, 2005).

Because of the organizational culture of rationality, many employees do not feel safe expressing their feelings related to grief. In addition, many employees may attempt to suppress their grief responses, fearing punishment or reprisal for disrupted work patterns (Clements et al., 2003, p. 45). They feel the need to immediately return to their pregrief level of functioning. "The consequence of this subtle pressure is that people make great efforts to hide what may be reservoirs of grief from others as a social duty" (Charles-Edwards, 2005, p. 12). Grief is viewed as a workplace disruption "rather than a natural process by which the emotions reorganize themselves to cope with the loss and re-establish healthy relationships" (Sunoo & Solomon, 2001, p. 80), which is the perfect climate for disenfranchised grief.

When organizations fail to address grief issues in the workplace, employees are left to experience their emotions alone. Grief that is unacknowledged or not validated can lead to what is known as "disenfranchised grief" (Thompson, 2009). There are several types of disenfranchised grief, such as minimizing the effect of the death of a pet, the loss of a child through miscarriage, or the death of a lover married to another individual. These types of losses lack traditional social support and validation related to the loss, as does the death of a coworker for those who continue to work following the loss. (Beder, 2004; Eyetsemitan, 1998, p. 471; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; Rando 1993, p. 498; Thompson 2009, p. 13;).

The grief experienced by employees when a coworker dies is very real. In learning of a coworker's death one individual reported, "I remember seeing the nurse manager's mouth move, but it was like the words were coming out in slow motion and not real at all." (Clements et al., 2003, p. 46). Jeffreys (2004) indicated that the death of a

coworker can "be similar to the loss . . . of a person's own family member or friend" (p. 24).

Customarily, organizations establish policies and procedures in anticipation of possible disasters occurring such as fires or tornados to the extent that they have regular drills to ensure everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency. However, these same organizations fail to plan to respond to a workplace loss, such that many organizations are not prepared for one. Loss is inevitable, whether due to retirement, job change, or organizational restructuring. The probability that an organization will suffer the death of an employee at some point is very high, yet few employers prepare for this occurrence (Tehan & Thompson, 2012). The University of California at Berkeley is at the other end of the spectrum when it comes to preparing for the loss of an employee. They not only anticipate loss but calculate their anticipated mortality rate of faculty, staff, and students every year. Calculating the

> anticipated death rate . . . can help employers to prepare for this inevitable life
>
> cycle event. To estimate the number of deaths per year in your workplace, simply
>
> apply the death rate to the appropriate demographic group in the general
>
> population (available through census data) to your population of employees and
>
> clients. (Hoffman & Goya, 2006, p. 162)

At first glance, this preparation may seem a shocking and perhaps morbid practice, but it exemplifies forward thinking regarding what is needed in the workplace. "To deny the reality of death is not only absurdly illogical, it also means we are likely to be ill-equipped when we are touched by death in some way" (Thompson, 2009, p. 1).

The University of California Berkeley's approach shows wisdom. Many organizations cannot stop working because of a loss. Work must continue, frequently without interruption. If an emergency room nurse dies on the way to work, someone must cover the shift because medical emergencies do not stop. Lin Grensing-Pophal (2000) highlighted this reality, noting. "Nurse Managers need to handle the emotional repercussions for themselves and their staff. At the same time, managers must redistribute work and set employees back on the path to productivity" (p. 30). Employees are forced into the restorative focus of the DPM before they have even dealt with the shock of the unexpected death (Turner, 2012).

Similar to a hospital, a university is required to follow the same operational procedure if a professor dies during the semester. The professor's classes must be reassigned as soon as possible, so as not to disrupt the students' education, which is one of the reasons the University of California-Berkeley calculated their annual mortality rate: "UC Berkeley experiences about 20 faculty and staff deaths each year" (Hoffman & Goya, 2006, 164). Developing guidelines related to preparing for an unexpected death "simultaneously" benefits "the university and the bereaved" (Hoffman & Goya, 2006, 164).

Experience of the Employee

Many complicated issues are related to workplace loss. Frequently employees do not know how to respond. "They may feel uncomfortable when someone cries, or feel they cannot mention the loss" (Maxim & Mackavey, 2005, p. 112). Returning to the DPM and the restorative orientation, employees want to know how a workplace loss is going to affect them personally because they do not know what the new normal will be.

A new normal has to be determined because the workplace cannot be the same as it was

before the individual died (Fox, 2005; McGuinness, 2007, p. 17). "The goal of grief after

a sudden traumatic death is to acknowledge the loss of identity and the change this loss

will have in co-victim's life, and reinvest in life within the new structure" (DeRanieri et

al., 2002, p. 36). What organizations do not realize is that the surviving employees will

form opinions based on the reaction of the organization, which will help define that new

normal. How the organization responds can change the "cognitive and emotional

connections" employees have; for better or for worse (Rhee, Dutton, & Bagozzi, 2006, p.

31).

Experience of the Manager

> With the possible exception of mental health and mortuary professionals, most
>
> persons who deliver death notifications have not received curriculum-based
>
> education on how to perform this task or how to respond to the grieving or acutely
>
> traumatized person. (Stewart et al., 2000, p. 612)

Management professionals rarely receive training on how to their employees of a death,

but frequently the obligation of telling them of the death of a coworker falls to managers

(Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; Jeffreys, 2005; Lynn, 2008;

U.S. Fish and Wild Life, 2013; Yost, 2013). They also are usually the notifiers when an

employee needs to be told that a family member has died, leaving the untrained middle

manager in a very uncomfortable position (Stewart et al., 2000, p. 612). During a time of

loss, when employees are most in need, "The managerial rule books fail us" (Dutton,

Frost, Worline, Lilius, & Kanov, 2002, p. 55). Stewart et al. (2000) found that in

professions that expect to experience loss on the job, such as law enforcement, 40% of

the notifiers had received no training in death notification procedures and even the ones who had received training reported feeling distress after delivering a notification (p. 611).

It is critical for a manager to have support of upper management during a death notification situation. Unfortunately, in many organizations power is centrally located (Sinclair & Haines, 1993). The middle manager is left to determine how best to handle the situation without support. When the lines of communication are not open it can prove disastrous because roles are ambiguous and information is guarded (Sinclair & Haines, 1993). The U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service (2013) has strict guidelines regarding notification with direction as to who is to be notified first, the person responsible, the need to intercept information before the family has been notified, and so on. It is a detail-oriented guide regarding in the line of duty death; it is 115 pages long.

Most managers do not have 115 page guides to assist them and must perform a balancing act during a time of loss. Their success hinges on an open flow of communication from manager to employee, employee to manager, manager to administration, and administration to manager. This open level of communication can enable the manager to convey an "empathic response" while also assisting the employees to return to functioning in the workplace environment (Lynn, 2008, p. 462). "This can be significantly important to corporate managers and administrators who must maintain ongoing productivity despite such disruption, while promoting adaptive coping for their employees" (Clements et al., 2003, p. 45).

Managers are put in the unenviable position of having to meet the needs of the organization and of their subordinates (Jeffreys, 2005; Yost, 2013). They have to be supportive but also ensure a "safe productive work environment" (Turner, 2012, p. 8),

which can be particularly difficult because the manager must engage in the DPM immediately. After learning of the loss, a manager must oscillate from grief response to restorative response by telling the employees of the loss. The manager must deal with the disruption to the work environment immediately. All forms of loss cause disruption and a period of readjustment, but an unexpected death can be particularly difficult for an organization: "The effect of the death may result in significant disruption to the structure, function, and reorganization of those struggling to adapt to the sudden loss" (DeRanieri et al., 2002, p. 31).

Organizations do not operate in a vacuum. After a loss, people outside the organization are also affected whether customers, vendors, or students (Fox, 2005; Perrault, 2011; Yost, 2013). Frequently, managers are also the notifiers when it comes to interested third parties. They intercept phone calls, reassign work, and are expected to take into consideration how to notify the employees to reassign the work and how much information to release to outside parties (OPM, 1996; Perrault, 2011; Salmore, 2012; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2013; Yost, 2013).

In a small study, Maxim and Mackavey (2005) found that none of the managerial participants reported having received training in addressing grief in the workplace and identified it as a need. With training they learn what Lynn (2008) emphasized in relation to death notification, "To successfully meet this expectation, nurse managers must first care for their own physical and emotional needs before attempting to care for unit staff members" (p. 462). When managers do not receive training and are left with the task of keeping their department running, they frequently do not feel supported, and their own grief goes unacknowledged. "Because organizations typically provide few guidelines for

responding to the death, managers are often overwhelmed by uncertainty, discomfort, and doubt" (Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009, p. 617). Managers are not immune to experiencing disenfranchised grief. According to Kinder and Cooper (2009), "It is often underestimated how a death at work can impact a manager from an emotional point of view" (p. 412).

Studies have shown that employees look to their managers and not upper administration for how to respond to a tragic loss (Charles-Edwards, 2009; Lynn, 2008, p. 462). Hazen (2008) reported that employees indicated after a workplace loss that they received the most support from colleagues and immediate supervisors but not the organization (p. 84). Upper levels of organizations need to recognize that employees need support from all aspects of the work environment and social support from outside (McGuinness, 2009). The way management and the administration respond to a loss is considered key as to whether employees work on the loss towards a new normal or become disengaged from work (Fox, 2012).

Although upper administration may present as unaffected or indifferent to a workplace loss that is a common misperception. They are affected but fail to adequately convey that to the employees (Grensing-Pophal, 2000). Frequently, they are seen as being more concerned "with corporate stability and avoidance of poor media coverage or potential litigation" (Clements et al., 2003, p. 46). Researchers have perpetuated this perception by extolling the need for policy and procedures related to workplace loss, not related to the needs of the employees but as the need to avoid legal action and permanent damage to the organization's reputation (Gibson & Iwaniec, 2003; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; Regel, 2007; Thompson, 2009; Vivona & Ty, 2011; Yost, 2013).

Preparation and Training

Organizations and human resources need training on how loss and bereavement impact the workplace and how to recognize the signs of grief, with an emphasis on compassion (Hazen, 2008; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001; Vivona & Ty, 2011). This training should include support for frontline managers, mentoring by experts in the field of loss, and result in written guidelines that can be followed during a time of loss (Perrault, 2012). The goal of such preparation is to facilitate an organization being competent in addressing a workplace loss before one occurs (Charles-Edwards, 2009; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, 2013; Vivona & Ty, 2011). This training and preparation needs to include education specific to suicide so that managers can know the warning signs that indicate someone is a suicide risk, steps to take, and resources available if an employee is perceived as being suicidal (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Charles-Edward, 2009, p. 111; Kinder & Cooper, 2009, p. 417).

Having policy and procedures in place makes "good business sense" because it helps with navigating through a difficult time, reduces absenteeism, facilitates a return to productivity, and reduces employee turnover (McGuinness, 2007, p. 12; Perrault, 2012). A long-term study was completed in 2003, which estimated that, "hidden grief costs U.S. companies up to $75.1 billion annually" (Hazen, 2008, p. 78). They arrived at this figure when all circumstances were factored together, including use of leave, lack of productivity, work errors, emotional issues, and substance abuse, all related to grief (Hazen, 2008).

Another important element of training includes acknowledging that everyone grieves differently and different cultures have their own customs related to grief. Grief

can be an isolating experience for employees who are not part of the "in" culture

regarding religion and cultural norms (Stein & Cropanzano, 2011; Taylor, 2007).

Training and policies related to employee loss increase death awareness and help

employees better prepare for a loss. If done with sensitivity and compassion, this training

can reduce employees' death anxiety and sense of isolation (Grant & Wade-Benzoni,

2009, p. 616).

Organizations also need to be prepared for and receive training in responding to

traumatic loss. First, they need to recognize that all loss is not the same and that the

traumatic death of a coworker due to suicide, homicide, or some other violent means

requires different interventions (Currier et al., 2006; DeRanieri et al., 2002; Smid et al.,

2015). An organization's response to an onsite traumatic death is critical. "The actions

taken as a result of organizational policies regarding the traumatic death of a coworker

should be reviewed to determine if the effects of traumatic death are mitigated or

exaggerated by such policies" (Vivona & Ty, 2011, p. 107). The type of response can

define an organization for years to come. If an organization blames the victim, scapegoats

a manager, or distances itself from the death, that may create lasting effects to its

reputation from that it may never recover (Sinclair & Haines, 1993). Howard Lutnick, the

head of the brokerage firm Cantor Fitzgerald, was immediately vilified when the

company stopped the paychecks of the 658 employees who died on 9/11. The company

had to quickly find a way to pay the surviving families to salvage its image, even though

its ability to function as a brokerage firm had been destroyed in the terrorist attacks. It

was the only way to restore its reputation and to do the right thing by the grieving

families (Mason, 2011).

Interventions for Traumatic Loss

Traumatic loss requires specific interventions because "the aftermath of traumatic loss can undermine survivors' fundamental beliefs about themselves and their larger world" (Currier et al., 2006, 403). The research community have not reached consensus on the type of intervention or what to call it. A sampling of the literature covers critical incident response (Attridge & VandePol, 2010), critical incident stress debriefing [CISD] (Aucott & Soni, 2016; Sacks, Clements, & Fay-Hillier, 2001), emotional first aid (Gilat & Reshef, 2015), psychological first aid [PFA] (Kondro, 2011; Raza, 2016; Solon, 2016), critical incident stress management [CISM] and psychological debriefing (Regel, 2007), brief eclectic psychotherapy for traumatic grief (Smid et al., 2015), disaster mental health (Math, Nirmala, Moirangthem, & Kumar, 2015), and a trauma response team (Silberman et al., 2006).

These studies overlap and at times terms are used interchangeably, which is incorrect. Psychological first aid was developed by National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with specific modules and is designed to be delivered by "mental health and other disaster response workers" (Brymer et al., 2006, p. 5). However, some professionals use it as a generic term, which can be confusing. This use applies to the other interventions; at times they are used as generic terms, and other times they refer to a specific intervention that comes with training and competencies.

There is disagreement as to how effective the interventions are and which one to utilize following a traumatic loss. Immediately after a loss "psychological debriefing is the most common form of early intervention" (Vivona & Ty, 2011, p. 107), though some studies have found that debriefing "may be detrimental" to individuals (Matthews et al.,

2011, p. 38). The World Health Organization approved a field guide on PFA partially as an alternative to "psychological debriefing which has been found to be ineffective" (Kondro, 2011, p. E1014). Perreault (2011) was a little more measured in her assessment of psychological debriefing:

> This does not mean debriefing should never be used, but that it should be used with caution—that it is being used at the right time, in the right way, with the right person, rather than as a standard practice across the board. (p. 110)

Math et al. (2015) made a case for DMH because "there are no systematic studies to answer the efficacy and usefulness of the PFA" (p. 267). Vivona and Ty (2011) presented evidence for CISD, claiming it was "designed to reduce the severity of trauma symptoms and restore groups to some sense of normalcy" (p. 108), and Math et al. (2015) countered with "CISD and CISM "may actually produce harm" (p. 267). What is common throughout the different interventions is that "when properly delivered, [they] are helpful in reducing the symptoms of severe stress that affect individuals who have experienced a workplace trauma" (Attridge & VandePol, 2010, p. 135). The key is training and recognizing that every traumatic loss is different and the interventions should not be applied as one size fits all (Andriessen, Castelli Dransart, Cerel, & Maple, 2017).

Postvention

Although there may be conflicting opinion on the specific interventions needed, a consensus does exist that those who have experienced a traumatic loss need trained individuals to help them with their loss. The one traumatic loss that has the most research behind it and interventions for those left behind is suicide. "Interventions that occur after

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a suicide are called 'postvention'—a term originated by Edwin Shneidman in 1968 at the

first conference of the American Association of Suicidology" (Erlich, 2016, p. 1).

No one is ever truly prepared for suicide. In addition to all the issues already

covered related to a workplace loss there are issues that are unique to the death of a

coworker when the cause of death is suicide.

> Thus, suicide survivors face the burden of finding reasons to explain the death and
>
> suffer from feelings of shame about the cause of the death, guilt for not being able
>
> to prevent the death, blame directed towards self and others and abandonment.
>
> (Hanschmidt, Lehnig, Riedel-Heller, & Kersting, 2016, p. 16)

Employees share a sense of disbelief and regret that nothing was done to prevent the loss

(Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Clements et al., 2003; Charles-Edwards, 2005;

Erlich, 2016). Managers, in particular, are undersupported regarding the loss of an

employee to suicide. They are the ones who must decide how to tell the employees and

what details to share. They must rely on their own judgment while managing their own

emotions (Kinder & Cooper, 2009). If employees believe the organization is at least

partially responsible for the person's suicide, the manager is frequently the target of some

of the blame (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013).

A stigma accompanies suicide (Andriessen et al., 2017; Carson J. Spence

Foundation, 2013; Clements et al., 2003; Hanschmidt, 2016). Some cultures view suicide

as a sinful act or the act of a "disturbed" individual or of an irrational mind (Charles-

Edwards, 2005, p. 104). This stigma can create conflicting opinions as to how to

memorialize the deceased, if at all (Thompson, 2005). All of these responses can be

represented in the deceased employee's coworkers, which can complicate the grief

process for the members of an organization and contribute to disenfranchised grief (Thompson, 2005, p. 39).

At the same time, the organization is frequently concerned about potential damage to its image if the suicide is perceived to have been in response to something related to the workplace (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013). The organization must balance showing concern for the deceased, while recognizing that the deceased's family might pursue litigation over the work conditions believed to have contributed to the suicide (Kinder & Cooper, 2009, p. 414; Higher Education Mental Health Alliance [HEMHA], 2014).

There are several guides and guidelines related to postvensions following a suicide. The majority of the guides are related to adolescent suicide whose target audience is counseling centers, teachers, and principals. HEMHA (2014) published a postvention guide specific to college campuses that focuses mostly on the death of a student by suicide, the need for a training prior to a suicide, multiple checklists, what needs to happen in the first 72 hours following a suicide, the composition of a response team, how to handle notification, the media, supporting those impacted by the death, and concerns related to contagions, as in others being influenced to copy the suicide HEMHA, 2014, p. 23).

The Carson J. Spence Foundation's (2013) booklet is directed towards managers specific to the suicide of an employee. It has a step-by-step guide related to handling an employee suicide including: immediate action, the acute phase; short term, the recovery phase; and long term, the reconstruction phase (p. 4). Each step is detailed as to what to expect and how to respond, and includes a corresponding checklist. Though terms

overlap between suicide and other types of loss, unique to suicide are items like *dispel rumors and dispel contagions* (p. 6). Where other guides (McGuinness, 2007; Topper, 2008; Turner, 2012; Yost, 2013) suggested that outside support from counseling professionals might be needed, the Carson J. Spencer Foundation indicated that managers will need to arrange "for a specifically trained, behavioral health professional to be available in the workplace for some period of time" (p. 8).

Group Support

A common thread in most of the interventions and postventions is how beneficial meeting as a group can be for those who have suffered a loss, and not exclusively therapy groups but support groups and casual meetings (Andriessen et al., 2017; Carson J. Spencer Foundation, 2013; Meilman & Hall, 2006; Mothers Against Drunk Drivers [MADD], n.d.; Perreault, 2011). Frequently, what employees find is the most helpful during a time of loss is support from colleagues, upper management, and social support outside of the work environment (HEMHA, 2014; McGuinness, 2007, p. 19). Constantino and Smart (2014) found that people sought each other out in common areas rather than attending the bereavement groups provided by the institution. Seeking each other out gave the employees a sense of community (Turner, 2012).

Because grief is a shared experience, group meetings or community meetings are considered excellent interventions for the workplace (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Fox, 2012; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; McGuinness, 2007; Turner, 2012). Because the goal is "return individuals and the group to their pre-crisis state" group meetings help the employees address their collective loss and avoid disenfranchised grief (Lynn, 2008, p. 464). Group meetings help employees share their loss, receive education regarding signs

of grief, as well as how to recognize the signs of complicated grief or "maladaptive grief patterns" (Clements et al., 2003, p. 47). If maladaptive grief is identified, the sufferers can then be referred to their EAP or other counseling options (Lynn, 2008). One group meeting may not be sufficient; subsequent meetings may be needed because grief is a process (Clements et al., 2003, p. 48). Each employee will need to make that decision.

Rituals are also part of the group grief process. Funerals can be an important part of the grieving process and employees need to be granted time to attend (Fox, 2012; MADD, n.d.; OPM, 1996; Perreault, 2011; Topper, 2008; Turner, 2012; U.S Fish and Wild Life Service, 2013). Employees need to be permitted to attend out of town funerals, if they wish. Fox (2012) indicated that it is important that a "company representative" attends the funeral (p. 39). On the surface, the need for this attendance seems self-evident, but in the cases where the death occurred at work or the employee is perceived to have committed suicide in response to something at work, attending the funeral might not be appropriate. Giving the family space is particularly important if an employee's death is being investigated (Kinder & Cooper, 2009).

Organizations need to consider honoring the deceased in an appropriate way, outside of the funeral. On the surface, a memorial would seem to be a positive way to acknowledge a deceased coworker, but memorials come with challenges. The family needs to be consulted, which can be overwhelming too close to the death (Liberty Mutual, 2012; Perreault, 2011). All deaths need to be treated equally, because people will remember if decedents are treated differently. Although memorials and rituals are important, organizations must be aware of the cultural differences in the workforce (Beder, 2004; Charles-Edward, 2005; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; Hoffman & Goyer, 2009;

Jeffreys, 2005; Turner, 2012; Vivona & Ty, 2011). Culture can be a challenge to navigate

because an organization can be made up of employees with very diverse backgrounds.

"What worked for one cultural group may be considered inappropriate for another"

(Perreault, 2011, p. 15). As Taylor (2007) pointed out, "Not every custom comes with a

handbook" (p. 44), which means there is not a one size fits all response, so it can be

challenging to honor the deceased in an appropriate, meaningful compassionate way

(Dutton & Workman, 2011; Hoffman & Goya, 2006).

      "Unleashing compassion in the workplace not only lessens those suffering the

direct effects of trauma, it enables them to recover from future setbacks more quickly and

effectively" (Dutton et al., 2002, p. 56). There needs to be a change from the

organizational culture to one of compassion. Compassion offers support to employees as

well as managers (Hazen, 2008, p. 81). Support contributes to compassion and needs to

be a matter of policy (Kendall-Raynor, 2014; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001; Yost, 2013).

Compassion leads to healing and a reduction in disenfranchised grief. When leaders go

beyond what is expected during a time of loss workplace healing is promoted (Dutton et

al., 2002; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005).

      Hallin and Gustavsson (2009) take a contrary view of compassion being a part of

policy related to workplace loss. If a workplace has no policy, then the actions by

management to attend a funeral or send flowers are seen as genuine. If a policy is in

place, those actions are seen as following protocol; the action is diminished in meaning

because it is not seen as voluntary. Instead of implementing policy, responding with

compassion should be part of the organizational culture and corporate social

responsibility (Hallin & Gustavsson, 2009, p. 214).

The head of the Hospice Foundation of America declared, "Responding to grief is a prevention measure" (Duff, 1999, p. 12). Several organizations—Hospice (McGuinness, 2007; Turner, 2012), MADD, n.d., AIDS Bereavement and Resiliency of Ontario (Perreault, 2012), and Liberty Mutual (2012)—have booklets with suggestions on how institutions can prepare for grief in the workplace and, to varying degrees, the death of an employee. They all cover the importance of preparation, signs of grief, common problems experienced in the workplace environment, acknowledging the loss, importance of communication, helping employees get back to work, and when to call in experts. Perreault's (2012) guide goes into the most detail for organizations wishing to formulate their own grief related policy. Without mentioning the dual process model, all four guides explain with examples the importance of time spent in both loss-oriented processes and restoration-oriented processes.

The U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service (2013) published a manual related to the loss of an employee on the job, which includes a tear out sheet booklet to assist managers before, during, and after a workplace death. The manual is a comprehensive guide of how to respond, who is responsible for various actions, who to contact, and what forms need to be completed and when. New employees must complete critical incident stress management training as part of their orientation, and the training includes identifying grief responses, how to secure grief counselors, what the stages of grief are, and how everyone grieves differently. The manual focuses more on the families of the deceased than the coworkers but the coworker experience is included.

The OPM (1996) published *A Manager's Handbook: Traumatic Events*. It covers

different types of workplace trauma such as "When Stress Doesn't Go Away,"

"Managing after a Disaster" and includes a three page chapter on "Recovering From the

Death of a Coworker." The chapter includes suggestions for providing an area for private

mourning, maintaining open lines of communication, handling notification, managers

serving as role models, holding memorial services, reassigning work, replacing the

deceased, and making counseling available to employees through employee assistance

programs.

The University of South Australia (2017) has a manual for addressing the death of

a staff member, and as with *Line of Duty Death* (U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, 2013)

it contains a checklist. The checklist is divided into tasks, identifies the responsible

parties for completing those tasks, and a place to check off items as completed. Unlike

Line of Duty Death, the University of South Australia manual does not include training

prior to a loss but does include procedures for notification, lines of communication,

methods of notification, paperwork to be completed, conducting a memorial service, and

signs of grief. Both manuals also include guidelines for handling the media and templates

for written communication. In the case of a workplace death, the media can prove to be

very intrusive and upsetting to the survivors and clear lines of communication to

employees, families, unions, and regulatory agencies are paramount (Matthews et al.,

2011, p. 42).

The University of California at Berkeley has one of the more detail oriented and

specific response networks, which is directed towards all levels of employees. They

calculate how many employees they will lose a year, have guidelines for responding to

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the death of a coworker based on department, and use a program integration model to ensure that the organization is responsive to the needs of the organization and the individuals affected by the death (Hoffman & Goya, 2009).

One of the most important aspects of any policy related to the death of a coworker is communication. Clear communication between frontline workers, management, human resources, and upper management results in all concerned parties tending to respond favorably in a time of loss (Hazen, 2008; Jeffreys, 2005; McGuinness, 2007; Perreault, 2012). Guidelines need to reflect that some communication may be prohibited by confidentiality laws or the wishes of the decedent's family (O'Connor et al., 2010, p. 133; Yost, 2013). If the limitations of communication are part of an existing policy, the organization will not present as though they are keeping secrets during a time of loss when they are legally prohibited from releasing information or respecting the families' wishes (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Perreault, 2012).

Limits of the Literature

At first glance, plenty of research seems to exist related to grief, the dual process model, forms of grief, traumatic grief, ways to manage grief, and how to respond to grief, but much of that research has focused on bereaved individuals who experienced a personal loss outside of work and return to work still dealing with that loss. The research that focuses on death in the workplace typically falls into one of three subcategories; jobs where death is part of the job (such as hospice), the death of a coworker that occurs on the job, or deaths related to the traumatic loss of a coworker, like suicide (Ballam, 1998; Bartone & Ender, 1994; Brabant, 2010; Breen & O'Connor, 2007; Jakoby, 2012; Kinder & Cooper, 2009; Lynn, 2008; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; McEvoy et al., 2010;

McKenzie, 2014; Regel, 2007; Sacks, Clements, & Fay-Hillier, 2001; Sinclair & Haines, 1993; Walter, 2009). The research that has been conducted on workplace loss tends to focus on liability and safety issues when the death occurs at work and the subsequent investigations into those deaths (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Matthews et al., 2011; Regel, 2007; Sinclair & Haines, 1993). The experience of the bereaved coworkers has not received as much attention.

In relation to academia, only two articles related to death of an employee in the academic workplace turned up in the search, one from the University of California-Berkeley and the other from the University of Australia. In 1999, the California State University System Chancellor recognized that there was a need for policy in response to the loss of employees at the University of California Berkeley. He "sponsored a major effort to develop death response guidelines for employees and other members of the university community" (Hoffman & Goya, 2006, p. 164). The University of South Australia (2017) also developed guidelines for handling workplace loss. These two articles are informative but also demonstrate the need for further research into loss in the academic workplace.

The absence of such literature is telling. The workplace is not thought of as a place where people are expected to experience grief. When a workplace does have policy related to loss, it is usually in the form of a bereavement policy related to personal loss such as the death of a grandparent, sibling, or spouse (Human Resources, 2014). Most policies allow between 3 to 5 days off for bereavement (Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; Yost, 2013). They are customarily inflexible policies based on biological relations and not the actual significance the deceased played in an individual's life (Hazen, 2008;

Sunoo & Solomon, 2001). Eyetsemitan (1998) observed that the paid bereavement days were frequently unique to white collar workers and that many times there were no provisions for blue collar workers. Once the bereavement leave is up many friends and colleagues expect the person to return ready to work. The societal norm is to grieve the loss of a relative, as indicated by approved time off from work for a family loss but not for the loss of a coworker. It is to the detriment of an organization to not have policy related to workplace loss (Yost, 2013).

Administrators have failed to recognize that any time a loss occurs employees grieve those losses and the loss directly impacts the workplace. When an employee experiences any form of grief, work productivity is reduced, concentration impaired, errors increase, use of sick leave goes up, use of drugs and alcohol increases, and employees change jobs more often (Charles-Edwards, 2005; Jeffreys, 2005; O'Connor et al., 2010; Pawlecki, 2010; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001; Thompson, 2009). Dutton et al. (2002) pointed out that it is not realistic to expect employees to work through their trauma "on their own time, outside the office" (p. 57). It is inevitable that employees will bring their grief to work with them. Not having a policy for times of loss is making the decision to remain unprepared. A policy related to workplace loss ensures a consistent response to loss and reduces the need for impulsive decision-making (Hoffman & Goya, 2006; McGuinness, 2009, p. 6; Yost, 2013). Poorly thought through decisions can have lasting effects (Duff, 1999).

Summary

One group appears very conspicuous by its absence in this literature review: students. Students were not included as part of this study for a reason. More research has

been done on students' experience of death in an academic environment than on that of employees. Entering the search terms *grief* and *university student* into the search box of the library's database returned 142,853 results; the first page of results were all related to loss and bereavement in university students and the sixth result concerned designing and conducting a workshop on grief for college students. These results do not mean that research does not need to continue related to the grief experience of college students, it just means more of a foundation to start from.

Entering different search terms related to the death of an employee or grief in a university or academic workplace resulted in articles related to death and grief in a workplace, but nothing related to academia. Breen and O'Connor (2007) found that the research that has been conducted in death studies is mostly quantitative in nature and with a top-down approach from the perspective of researchers and practitioners and not the bereaved. They suggest more of a qualitative approach, allowing the bereaved to tell their story. Fulton (1999) indicated that before researchers suggest what types of intervention should follow a loss, they should allow the bereaved to identify how they construct "their experiences and the meaning attached to it" (p. 50). Allowing this processing would reduce researcher bias and promote an understanding of the bereaved.

Manuals, booklets, and guidelines do exist related to loss in the workplace, but they are very organization specific, such as the *Line of Duty Death* by the U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service (2013) and that of the University of California at Berkeley (Hoffman & Goya, 2006) or the University of Australia (2017). They can serve as examples for other organizations but cannot be fully adopted because every organization has its own unique

culture. Guidelines need to be developed based on what researchers discover from interviewing those who have actually experienced a workplace loss.

The literature shows a difference in experiences related to workplace loss depending on the person's position in the organization. The manager charged with delivering the death notification and keeping the workplace running does not have time to process the loss of the employee (Stewart et al., 2000; Turner, 2012). The employee tasked with assuming the duties of the deceased while dealing with the loss of their coworker struggles with focus and not making mistakes (Fox, 2012; McGuinness, 2007). The experience of upper administration is the least defined in the literature for they present as being either heavy handed, concerned about image and avoiding legal problems or as absent (Hazen, 2008; Sinclair & Haines, 1993). The one consistency is that the literature shows different experiences and responses for each group. It is for this reason that this study was designed to include all three employee levels as participants in order to secure a holistic view of the experience of a coworker or employee death in the academic workplace.

The majority of the literature puts extra emphasis on the importance of clear lines of communication as crucial during a time of loss (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; Lynn, 2008; McGuinness, 2007; O'Connor et al., 2010; Turner, 2012; Yost, 2013). This research is all about communication. The only way of improving lines of communication is to determine what lines of communication existed during a time of loss (Sinclair & Haines, 1993). The only way to encourage an organization to engage in compassionate practices is to identify what grieving employees needed during a time of loss and received or did not receive (Dutton & Workman, 2012; Hazen, 2008;

Turner, 2012). The only way of knowing if managers felt prepared to be notifiers when there was a loss is to have them share their experience (Stewart et al., 2000). Similar statements can be made related to the employee experience, prevalence of disenfranchised grief, or whether or not type of loss made a difference. The definite gap in the research related to the stories of the bereaved and discovery is the starting point.

Andriessen et al. (2017) made a case for including the bereaved in transforming research into practice in relation to postventions. The same can be said for the focus of this study. What can be learned from the participants who have experienced a loss in the academic workplace can serve as a starting point for developing guidelines and trainings related to loss in the academic workplace. The ones who have experienced a loss are the experts and they deserve to be heard.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

The study of grief related to a workplace loss is in its infancy. Researchers have

begun to explore the experiences of employees who bring grief to work with them

following personal loss (Bauer, 2012; Davis, 2014; Duff, 1999; Eyetsemitan, 1998;

Joseph, 2001; McKenzie, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2010; Sunoo & Solomon, 1996; Tehan

& Thompson, 2012; Walter, 2009), employees who have experienced a variety of

workplace losses ranging from death, to downsizing and mergers, illness, terrorist

attacks, and natural disasters (Jeffreys, 2005; Perreault, 2011; Thompson, 2009; Turner,

2012) and employees dealing with end of life issues with loved ones (Cheung et al.,

2016; McGuinness, 2007; Pawlecki, 2010; Perreault, 2011; Turner, 2012). However,

there are only two articles related to the unexpected death of an employee in an academic

workplace, one from Berkeley (Hoffman & Goya, 2006) and the other from University of

South Australia (2017). Much remains to be discovered related to the experience of the

faculty, staff, and administrators left to cope with the death of their colleague while

simultaneously keeping the institution running at full efficiency for the students. For this

reason, this study was designed to be one of discovery, which is why grounded theory

was selected as the theoretical foundation.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory constructs theory through analysis of data, therefore the

researcher does not start with a hypothesis or assumption; instead the researcher begins

with a question or questions and collects data related to the questions (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, & Morales, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A standard quantitative survey would miss exploring the individual experiences of the participants. When the goal of the research is discovery, the researcher does not want to be limited by the methodology. The grounded theory approach allows participants to share their story without the predetermined boundaries of highly structured questions. During coding the researcher identifies the traits the narratives have in common related to a phenomena, looks for themes and patterns, actions taken, and for the dimensions of the responses. Through memo making and coding, what is not known emerges, which may lead to more questions. That is always a possibility with research that uses grounded theory. The literature supports this type of methodology because it is flexible and allows for discovery (Bauer, 2012; Creswell et al., 2007; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Jones & Alony, 2011; Peshkin, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The literature supports the use of grounded theory, but the techniques and practices considered classic grounded theory eschew a literature review. A researcher using grounded theory needs to remain open minded and not approach the research with preconceived notions. A literature review defeats that design (Glaser & Holton, 2004). This project began with an extensive literature review but at the same time demonstrated that there were gaps in the literature related to the death of an employee in the academic workplace. However, it is important to make note of that deviation from classic grounded theory.

Strauss and Corbin created grounded theory in 1967 "as a way to develop explanatory and predictive theory about social life, roles, and expected behaviors in

people" (McNabb, 2013, p. 329). Grounded theory was considered appropriate for the study of workplace loss in an academic setting because it allowed for learning and the building of hypotheses from data analysis, as opposed to rejecting or retaining a hypothesis.

> The GT researcher listens to participants venting issues rather than encouraging them to talk about a subject of little interest. The mandate is to remain open to what is actually happening and not to start filtering data through pre-conceived hypotheses and biases to listen and observe and thereby discover the main concern of the participants in the field and how they resolve this concern. The forcing, preconceived notions of an initial professional problem, or an extant theory and framework are suspended in the service of seeing what will emerge conceptually by constant comparative analysis. (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 11)

The literature related to exploring loss supports the use of grounded theory, dating back to its very origins. In 1965, Glaser and Straus published *Awareness of Dying* followed by *A Time for Dying* in 1968, which were the first applications of grounded theory. In the interim, they published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967 (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 249). Creswell et al. (2007) indicated that grounded theory is appropriate for use with "Process questions: Questions about experiences over time or changes that have stages and phases" (p. 241). This captures the essence of the research. It has already been established that when a loss happens there are stages and changes that a person experiences over the course of time (Bauer, 2012; Charles-Edwards, 2005; Guinness, 2007; McKenzie, 2014; Rando, 1993; Roos, 2012; Sabadash, 2005; Stroebe & Schut, 1999; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001; Thompson, 2009). Grounded theory was selected to give

the researcher the flexibility to explore the experiences, identify the main concerns, and the changes experienced by those who have lost a coworker in an academic environment.

Researcher Bias

Containing researcher bias is a concern with all qualitative research. Containing researcher bias is a particular concern with this study, because half of the researcher was conducted at the researcher's home institution, Darton State College, where the research was well known that the familiarity could cause the participants to respond in a way in order to help the researcher, and the researcher could influence the participant responses due to wanting to help a friend. Conversely, the lack of familiarity with the researcher could have influenced the participants from Valdosta State in a different manner, due to the researcher being a stranger and asking questions about a very sensitive topic (Jones & Alony, 2011). This did not prove to be the case because the results were consistent between the two institutions. There was also a possibility of the Hawthorne effect, with the participants wanting to help the researcher because they perceived that the research could result in something positive for the participants' work situation (Jones & Alony, 2011).

Bracketing was utilized to address biases because "the hallmark of credible research is evidence of objectivity in the planning and execution of the research" (Drew, 2004, p. 215). This is particularly important in qualitative research because the researcher is the instrument used to gather the data, which can "taint the research process" (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 80). Bracketing has no uniform definition, but it is the attempt to separate the "qualities that belong to the researcher's experience of the phenomenon" from the actual research (Drew, 2004, p. 215). The researcher's story, and observations

from her reflexive journal appear at the end of Chapter 5. By including this material the researcher acknowledges her personal experiences and perceptions of this topic. This will allow the, "readers to understand [her] positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds" (Creswell, 2000, p. 127).

Another bracketing technique that was utilized was reflexive journaling, which was done by the researcher before the research began to identify preconceived notions prior to the actual undertaking of the research. Other aspects of the reflexive journal included observations related to role conflicts, resentments, personal beliefs, reflections, and values related to loss and bereavement, and presuppositions as to what the data would reveal (Drew, 2004; Tufford & Newman, 2011, p. 87).

Data Collection Sites

It was decided that there would be two sites for data collection, Darton State College and Valdosta State University. Although both institutions are part of the University System of Georgia and are in South Georgia, less than a 100 miles apart, they are different in size and mission. Darton State College is predominantly a community college, offering 2-year degrees and career programs. Valdosta State University is a regional university, which is substantially bigger and offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Because grounded theory consists of comparing incidents to incidents, it was appropriate to include a state college and regional university for comparison purposes (Glasser & Holton, 2004), which allowed comparisons to be made between a smaller institution and a bigger one. The results showed no discernable differences.

Recruiting

The survey population consisted of current and former faculty, staff, and administrators from Darton State College and Valdosta State University. Neither of these institutions have formal guidelines for addressing the unexpected death of an employee, which was why they were selected for participation in the study and not as a matter of convenience because the researcher had affiliations at both institutions. Currently, when after a death, administrators must use their "best judgment" to keep the institution functioning, while addressing the needs of bereaved employees. Prior to this study, both institutions had experienced more than one employee death within the past 10 years.

Initial participants consisted of employees, from both institutions, who had expressed an interest in participating in the research, after inquiring about the researcher's focus for her dissertation. There were two requirements for participation: full time employment at either institution at some point and the experience of loss at one of the institutions. Length of employment was not controlled for because the researcher wanted to have the experiences of long term employees and those with less time on the job. This was also the reason why length of time since the loss was not controlled for. The researcher wanted to include the experiences related to losses that happened long ago and more recent losses.

The study was designed to include as many participants as needed to reach data saturation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Mason (2010), the most common sample size for qualitative doctoral projects consist of 20 or 30 people (p. 13). This project consisted of 10 current and former employees from each institution, for a total of 20 participants. There were 10 men and 10 women who

completed the survey, and one additional participant who engaged in an email exchange with the researcher concerning the project but did not complete the survey.

The initial pool of participants received an email, which explained the research, the fact that participation was voluntary, assigned them a number for confidentiality purposes, included a copy of the informed consent and a copy of the questions they would be asked to answer in the survey, and a link that took them to the Qualtrics survey on the internet (Appendix A). The reason the introductory email included a copy of the questions and the informed consent, was so that prospective participants could preview both before deciding to participate in the study. This allowed them to be fully informed before agreeing to participate. No one was pressured to participate. There were no follow-up emails to remind them that the survey was still available, if they wished to participate. They were not required to acknowledge the email; they could simply ignore it.

Once the participants entered the survey, the initial recruits were asked to provide email addresses of people they thought might be interested in participating in the survey. The individuals referred by the initial participants received the same introductory email, inviting them to participate and allowing them to preview the questions before they decided to participate.

Snowball sampling was selected due to the nature of the study. It ensured that participants would feel comfortable discussing their experience with loss and bereavement, which can be a topic people avoid (Bauer, 2012). This could affect the results, in that those who do not wish to discuss their experience with loss would not have

an opportunity to present their unique perspective. Those who have experienced disenfranchised grief may self-selected out of the study (Thompson, 2009, p. 13).

Snowball sampling did not work. Twelve of the initial participants expressed a desire to be included in the study. From those individuals twelve more names were submitted for possible recruitment but only two responded to the email request to participate. Another participant was recruited by a member of the researcher's doctoral cohort. A total of 59 individuals received invitations to participate in the study. Nineteen were sent to employees at Darton State College and 40 to Valdosta State University. None of the participants from Darton were recruited using snowball technique. Recruiting from Valdosta proved more of a challenge.

There were three participants from Valdosta who expressed an interest in participating in the study. Those three individuals recommended five additional people, three of which completed the survey. That brought the number of participants from Valdosta to six and recruitment stalled. After 3 weeks, the head of the graduate office at Valdosta State was asked for possible suggestions related to recruitment challenges and the response was, "I wonder if the nature of the topic (death in the workplace) just causes an individual to avoid sharing even if done anonymously." There was a suggestion that maybe focus groups might be more successful or "Maybe the same challenge though would occur with either approach."

At that point, one of the members of the researcher's doctoral cohort contacted two Valdosta State employees who agreed to participate, though only one completed the survey. From that individual, three more people were recommended for participation, though none did. The researcher then did a search of the Valdosta State departmental web

sites. Many of the faculty had a curriculum vita posted. Faculty who had been at Valdosta State for 10 or more years received an email invitation to participate in the study for a total of 27 invitations. Two people completed the survey and one emailed the researcher with a personal story related to loss. That brought to total to 10 from Darton, 9 from Valdosta State and one personal communication from Valdosta. The researcher then received an email from an individual from Valdosta State who had heard about the research by word of mouth and wanted to participate. With that final participant, no more recruiting emails were sent. Twenty participants had been the goal and there was always a possibility to recruit more participants if the data did not reach saturation with 20. The individual who had emailed with a personal story agreed to have that story included in the study. It took 3 months to recruit 21 participants.

Gallo (2016) indicated experiencing similar challenges in recruiting participants for his study related to grief, "This author predicted that it would be relatively easy to find participants, but that was not true. It was hard to get any of the subjects to take part in the survey" (p. 133). However, once he was able to secure participants, "they were whole heartedly involved" (p. 133). The same was true for the research conducted at Valdosta State and Darton. Once the participants took the survey, the 80% were willing to complete follow up questions, and verify the results that emerged from the data.

There was a challenge in securing a diverse population, due to the limitations of snowball sampling and recruiting by length of service at the institution. The average length of time of service was 17 years, with only one participant with 5 years of employment at the institution. The rest of the participants had at least 6 years of employment at the institution with nine participants with 20 or more years.

Another challenge in securing a diverse pool concerned the limited number of deans/chairs and upper level administrators on college campuses, as opposed to faculty and staff, which are more abundant. At the time the survey was conducted, Darton State College had eight deans or chairs and only two who were not female. Because the participants were all self-selecting it was impossible to control for diversity related to gender, sexual orientation, race, and cultural background. These are very important factors because gender, cultural background, religious beliefs, and age can all influence grief responses. With such a small participant pool, the study is limited regarding the broader application of the results of this research (Stein & Cropanzano, 2011; Taylor, 2007). The limitations of the study are discussed in Chapter 5.

Procedures

All participants received a standardized email, describing the purpose of the research and their role in the study. Participants also received information regarding the researcher's professional and academic history, program of study at Valdosta State University, verification of approval of Valdosta State University's Institutional Research Board, and memorandum of understanding from Darton State College agreeing to participate in the research. Participants were given the option to drop out of the study at any time during the research. They were also permitted to request their answers not be used in the research.

The participants received a copy of the informed consent for review in the introductory email. It explained how their information would be collected, responses downloaded, the measures used to protect confidentiality, plan for data storage, the contact information for the researcher and for two counselors who volunteered to speak

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with any participants who needed to talk as a result of the research, though none of the participants utilized this service.

Participants were identified by the number they received in the initial email, to help protect their identity. They entered this number when they began the survey. That was the only way they were identified in the data analysis and results. Demographic information was collected on gender, duration of employment at the institution, and length of time because the most resent coworker death. The final demographic question asked the participants to identify as faculty, staff or administrators. That answer determined which set of open ended questions they received.

Data Analysis

As participants completed the surveys, the surveys were downloaded from the website as text documents. Identical procedures were used with each document, consistent with grounded theory (Glasser & Holton, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Each response was read two times, without notes being taken. Following the initial readings, the documents were imported into Nvivo 11. Once they were imported, they were read again and memos made within Nvivo 11 with initial labels being made related to the responses from the participants. Memos were reviewed and compared to other memos. These comparisons lead to the memos to be sorted into subcategories and folders created related to patterns as they emerged from the data.

After the initial coding and sorting of memos, patterns began to emerge in the coding. Text searches were conducted related to words that appeared multiple times in the responses but did not appear in the initial survey questions. Words that stood out are included on Table 1.

Table 1. *Words Appearing Multiple Times*

Word	Number of Participants	Number of times used
Variations of "administration" including administration, dean, director, supervisor, superior	18	73
Variations of "impact" including shock, dismay, blow, daze	13	29
Email	10	16
Class or classes	8	29
Students	8	24

As a result of making memos, sorting memos, identifying patterns in the coding, and conducting text searches, additional follow-up questions were developed related to the ideal role of administration, preferred method of notification, and a question related to hiring adjuncts to cover the classes of the deceased. The question related to adjuncts included a direct quote from Participant 6, stating that administration should try to find adjuncts to assume a deceased colleague's classes, and not someone who worked with the deceased. The question related to adjuncts was added because the statement was an outlier from what other respondents had shared related to assuming the class of a deceased colleague. The question was added to see if others felt the same way and had not reported it or if that was really a minority opinion

Follow Up Questions

1. What are your thoughts on the following statement: "I think asking professors who were very close to their deceased colleague and friend to jump in and take over their classes needs to be reconsidered. I think in the future the college should attempt to find adjuncts or professors from a nearby institution to take over the classes."

2. What are your thoughts on the best way to notify coworkers/employees about the death of a colleague/coworker?

3. How would you describe the role upper administration would ideally take when an employee unexpected dies?

4. Anything you would like to add

The process related to the follow up surveys was identical to that conducted with the initial surveys, first two reads, importing into Nvivo 11, memos made, and memos sorted. The Text Search feature in Nvivo 11 was used as an alternative way to evaluate the responses and identify information the researcher may have overlooked. The Word Tree feature was also used for this purpose, to examine the responses from a different perspective, such as identifying the five words that proceeded and the five words that followed key terms like "student" in the participant responses. Those 10 words revealed the context that the word "student" was being used by the respondents. The word tree grouped similar responses together such as "covering classes" "for the good of the students," "smooth transition," and "they saw no disruptions."

The use of Text Search and Word Tree provided a more holistic way of looking at the data from every angle. For example, "student" had been identified in the initial memos as being seen frequently in several responses. It was not until the Word Tree query was done that "student" materialized as an important theme that helped to group concepts into categories and then refine categories into core categories, categories, and subcategories.

Using the word tree as a guide, the narratives were open coded related to the appearance of the word "student" A relationship was identified where there was an

intersection of the responses related to the "student" having to do with "focusing on students" and "honor covering classes" within the category of "reassignment of work." The intersection can be seen in a statement by Participant 1, for example, "It was a challenge but also an honor to assume my colleague's class. I felt like I was doing it for my colleague and I liked that part." Table 1 shows an example of the statements that were open coded related to the word "students," the identified intersections of "focus on the students" and "honor covering classes" that fit into the reassignment of work category.

Table 2. *Statements Related to the Word "Students"*

Open Coding	Intersection	Category
Needs of the students; seamless transition for students; classes needed to be covered for the students; people carried on for the sake of the students; students are the first priority; students suffer as little as possible; It is important for students to have a professor assume a class who is emotionally detached from the situation	Focus on the students	Reassignment of work
I felt like I was doing it for my colleague; meaningful to take over a class for a deceased colleague; can be a gift to that person's memory; some faculty will want to honor their colleague and help students adjust	Honor Covering Classes	

The use of open coding and identification of intersections, lead to the identification of 30 categories, within four Core categories. Of those four Core

categories, one stood Central, and met the Strauss and Corbin (1998) criteria for a Central

Category (p. 147). As was stated earlier, variations of "administration" appeared in 18 of

the 20 narratives, and was mentioned 73 times. It was the noun that appeared the most in

the narratives. A more detailed exploration of the Core Categories and Central Category

is covered in Chapter 4.

<div align="center">Reliability</div>

As discussed earlier, one of the issues related to qualitative research has to do

with reliability or *truth validity* of the results, a term suggested by Noble and Smith

(2015) as more accurate. The term means the research "clearly and accurately present[s]

[the] participants' perspectives" (p. 3). A reflexive journal was used to bracket bias but

there was an additional concern because the study consisted of only one researcher doing

all the data collection and coding. It was important to ensure that what the participants

intended was accurately reflected in the results. Respondent validation was used, where

participants were asked to review the final themes and concepts identified in the results

and asked if they "adequately reflect[ed] the phenomena being investigated" (Noble &

Smith, 2015, p. 4).

All the data collected was in the participants own words and loaded directly from

Qualtrics into Nvivo. By having the participants answer questions in long form, the risk

of transcription errors was drastically reduced. A second method was used to ensure the

integrity of the results in the form of member checking (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 159).

Member checking-consists of taking data and interpretation back to the participants in the

study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and the narrative

account. With the lens focused on participants, the researchers systematically check the data and the narrative account. (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127)

Member checking reduced the chance of interpretation errors and ensured that the responses would be in the participants' own words. Participants were asked to verify that the themes that emerged from the data reflected what they had intended on the survey. Participants reviewed and when necessary clarified what they had indicated in their survey responses and reacted to the themes identified in the analysis. Any changes or additional input made by participants were respected and reflected in the final analysis and verified with the participants again.

The researcher looked to the doctoral committee for suggestions related to reliability. The recommendation for the member checking and the use of a reflexive journal came from the committee. The committee chair recommended that the entire dissertation be reviewed by one of the participants. In order to avoid sabotaging the results, the committee recommended that if the reader was from Darton State College, then there needed to be a second reader from Valdosta State University. Therefore, Participants 1 and 16 agreed to read the dissertation, one from each institution.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Participants

With this type of research design, it was impossible to predict the composition of the participant pool. Invitations were sent to 33 faculty, 17 administrators, and seven staff, with 20 participants recruited. Though the distribution of those responding was split evenly between 10 male and 10 female participants, it could have just as easily been lopsided one way or the other. The participant list did spread out, somewhat, with 10 faculty, three staff, and seven administrators. The average length of service to the institutions was 17 years 4 months. Throughout the report participants will be identified by the number they were assigned at the time they were recruited.

Half the participants reported having experienced only one loss during their time in academia. That was particularly interesting, because some seemed to be unaware that other losses had occurred at their institution. Participant 33, who had worked at the institution 19 years stated, "After 35 years in academe, this was the first colleague who died suddenly of natural causes." Based on the responses of colleagues from the same institution, there had been several other deaths due to natural causes she was either unaware of or forgot about while she was completing the survey.

Participants who reported having experienced more than one death either combined the experiences into one or answered the survey with information about the death that impacted them the most. Participant 4 reflected the views of other participants

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when he wrote, "We also lost other colleagues suddenly just a year or two before [redacted]. However, I really didn't know them personally at all so I really didn't discuss them."

Only Participant 33 used the opportunity to compare the way two deaths she experienced were handled differently. Consistent with the other participants, she highlighted the death that had the greatest impact on her personally, and based on her account, it was handled poorly. She compared the response with one that she believed was handled well to illustrate what had been done wrong and the lasting impact on her and on the department she worked in.

There was no way of knowing what type of working relationship the participants had with the descendant when the surveys were sent out. As it turned out, half of the losses that were shared did not have direct work implications for the participants because the descendant worked in another department, which does not mean they did not experience grief related to the unexpected death, but they were not involved with the reassignment of work and did not assume new duties as a result of the death. This distribution proved to be beneficial to the study because the loss stories were varied, which provided several different perspectives. Although only three faculty and two administrators had direct experience related to covering the classes of a deceased faculty member, all the participants had experiences related to being notified that a coworker had died. Eight individuals shared their stories related to the death of an administrator, four faculty and four administrators, which gave insight into the loss of an administrator from an inside perspective, those tasked with running the department, and an outside

perspective of faculty, directly affected by the policies from that office but not the day-to-day operations.

Table 3. *Positions of Participants and Deceased*

# of Participants Reports	Participants' Position	Position of deceased coworker
6	Faculty	Faculty
2	Administration	Faculty
1	Staff	Faculty
2	Staff	Staff
1	Administration	Staff
3	Faculty	Administration
4	Administration	Administration
1	Faculty	Administration & Faculty

Comparison of Institutions

The reasons that the research was conducted at two data collection sites was to see if the experiences would be different at a smaller institution, as opposed to a bigger institution. Due to the nature of the stories shared, direct comparisons could not be made related to specific types of loss. How the death of a faculty member was handled at Darton State College had no counterpart at Valdosta State. The death of a member of upper administration at Valdosta State had no equivalent at Darton. Even though a point for point comparison could not be made, such as how classes were covered, other comparisons could still be made.

What stood out were the similarities. The death of a colleague by suicide elicited similar responses of second guessing and regret at both institutions. In notification, the majority of the participants preferred being told in person, not by email. Participants agreed that administration needed to take an active role when there was a death in supporting the department experiencing the loss, and in showing care and concern.

In addition to member checking, where all the participants were asked to review the findings and verify they were an accurate representation of their responses, Participant 1, from Darton State College, and Participant 16, from Valdosta State University, agreed to review the entire dissertation. They were asked to pay particular attention to the results, and indicate if the findings presented were an accurate portrayal of the responses. The participants made similar comments, summarized by Participant 16, "The organization is excellent, and clear . . . the results reflect the participants' perspectives."

Both the member checking and the review by Participants 1 and 16 were used to determine internal validity in "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, pp. 124–125). The findings from the member checking and the two participants point to the credibility of the research and speak to internal validity.

Core Categories, Categories and Subcategories

Four core categories emerged from the data: trauma, notification, work, and administration. The way the core categories were identified had to do with the frequency with which they appeared in participant responses but were also broad enough to encapsulate several major themes under their overarching umbrella. Trauma was directly

related to the deaths participants shared related to coworker suicide. Notification concerned the manner in which people learned of a coworker death, responses to the manner of learning of a coworker's death, and the preferred manner for being told a coworker had died. Work encapsulated anything related to the work environment including grief at work, reassignment of work, and impact of the death on productivity. Administration included the assessment of the response of administration at different levels in the hierarchy when there was an employee death, and the role participants indicated they would like to see administration play in the future.

The initial coding and emergence of the core categories lead to follow up questions related to reassignment of work, preferred manner of notification of a coworker's death, and the role upper administration should play in a loss. The follow up questions were asked to provide deeper insight into the dimensions that became the core categories.

Within the four core categories, 12 categories were identified, within those categories subcategories were identified. In the discussion, the **core categories** are bolded, *categories* are italicized, and <u>subcategories</u> underlined. Out of consideration for the reader, all have been compiled into one matrix for ease of reading (see Table 4) with the discussion following. Representative quotes from participants are used to illustrate each point and attributed to the participants based on the number assigned during recruitment. Therefore, Participant 3 is identified as *P3* when offset and *Participant 3* when included as part of the narrative, followed by the quote.

The core category **administration** is covered last due to the fact it has been

identified as the central category. It is the category that pulls all "the other categories

together to form an explanatory whole" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). The responses

generated in the **trauma**, **notification**, and **work** core categories all had threads that led

back to **administration**. How **administration** responded to the other three categories

directly influenced the responses generated by the participants. The word *administration*

and variations was used by 18 of the 20 participants in the initial survey, even though it

was not part of the survey questions. For this reason **trauma**, **notification**, and **work** are

discussed before **administration.** The categorical discussions are followed by a

discussion that ties all the results into the central category and the implications.

Table 4. *Core Categories, Categories, and Subcategories*

Core Category—Trauma	
Category—1 Coworker suicide	
Maybe it could have been prevented	3
Discovery	1
Still affected	1
Needs to be campuswide training	1
Some counseling offered	2
Core Category—Notification	
Category—2 Bad experiences with notification	
Email	3
Text	1
Category—3 Preferred Method by Participants	
Department experiencing the loss first before campuswide	11
Phone	8
Phone tree	1
In person	7
Email	5
Category—4 Notifier should be	
Supervisor/Department Head	7
Campuswide	6
From President	3
	(continued)

From Administration	3
Preauthorized	1

Core Category—Work

    Category—5 Grief at Work

        Experience

Personal	8
Workplace Implications	5
Life Lessons	4
Group Experience	7
Maybe it could have been prevented	3

    Category—6 Productivity

Did not Suffer	9
Suffered	6
Unsure	1

    Category—7 Reassignment of Work

Student Focus	7
Honor to cover classes	7
Unclear	5
Covering class upsetting	1

    Category—8 Hiring Adjuncts

Not a simple process	7
Right to refuse	6
Would deny faculty a chance to honor colleague	4
Need to hire adjuncts	1
Cooperative agreements	1

Core Category— Administration

    Category—9 Experience of Administrators

Offered support	4
Drop everything to get classes covered	3
Focus on students	3
Attended funeral, spoke with family	2
No time for self	2
Believes counseling should be offered	2
Campuswide training needed	1
Was the notifier	1

    Category—10 Response of Administration

Negative	8
Not Negative	5

    Category—11 Loss of an Administrator

Loss left department in turmoil for years	6
Productivity suffered	4

    Category—12 Upper Administration should

Take an active role	12
Admin	4
	(continued)

Core Categories, Categories, and Subcategories Table	(continued)	
Faculty-Staff		8
Show they care		10
Admin		5
Faculty-Staff		5
Offer counseling		7
Admin		4
Faculty-Staff		3
Decisions at the division level		3
Admin		0
Faculty-Staff		3
Allow memorials and funeral attendance		3
Admin		1
Faculty-Staff		3
Have a policy or preplanning		5
Admin		3
Faculty-Staff		2
Treat deceased employees the same		2
Admin		0
Faculty-Staff		2
Not demonstrate forced compassion		1
Admin		1
Faculty-Staff		0

Core Category 1: Trauma

The **trauma** core category contains responses from only three participants, two from Darton and one from Valdosta, who experienced the loss of a coworker or coworkers by suicide. The **trauma** category did not reach data saturation, meaning had more data been gathered on the suicide of a coworker it might have shed "further light on the issue under investigation" (Mason, 2010, p. 2). Although trauma was only seen in the responses from Participants 8, 22, and 58, their experiences were so uniquely different from the other participants, it was important for the **trauma** core category to be identified, the stories honored, and shared with the results. Thus **trauma** became a core category and was placed first because it differed from the other core categories in

expressions of regret at not being able to prevent the deaths, discovery of the descendant, and lingering effects of the deaths.

All deaths are upsetting, but suicide brings issues not seen in other types of deaths. With the exception of the three suicide deaths, the other deaths discussed by the participants were unexpected but had to do with undetermined or natural causes, such as a heart attack. There were no reports of a death by homicide, violent death, or ones that death occurring on campus. The three participants who experienced the loss of a coworker to suicide give insight into how the experience for the coworkers is different from a death of a coworker due to natural causes.

Participant 58 was the only participant who asked to participate in the survey who did not know the researcher ahead of time. She contacted the researcher via email after hearing a colleague discussing the survey. She was not referred through the referral mechanism in the survey instrument. Participants 8 and 22 were recruited by invitation of the researcher. They shared their story about the same suicide that occurred 5 years prior to the study. Participant 58 was from the other institution and referred to two employee suicides that had occurred 6 months prior to the study.

One thing that stood out about the responses of those in the **trauma** category was the statements of regret not seen in the other responses. With the other losses, Participants 12, 14, 16, and 36 referenced the health of the decedents but with no mention of perhaps preventing the loss. Participant 36 made a comment fairly representative of statements made regarding the other losses, "It was more of a shock as he was in pretty good health."

Instead of talking about implications for the job or sadness related to the loss, all three of the individuals in the **trauma** category reflected on something they could have done differently or should have done that ranged from talking to the decedent more to maybe they could have prevented the death

Maybe Could Have Prevented (three participants)

P22—I wish I had talked to him more, [sic] I knew he was going through something but I didn't know it was that bad.

P58—You always wonder if there were signs that we should have paid attention to that could have prevented it from happening.

P8—I wish I would have been more observant in the weeks leading up to the suicide. I'm sure there are some clues I missed, and I should have seen them. Maybe it would have changed the outcome, but I'm not sure.

Two out of the three participants in the **trauma** core category used the word "should" in relation to themselves and the time before their coworker's suicide. The word "should" appears six times in the initial survey responses. The word "should" appeared 49 times in the follow-up survey, all in relation to administration. In the initial survey, three of the "shoulds" had to do with what people saw as the role of upper administration in responding to a coworker death. Only one participant outside of the **trauma** core category used the word "should" in relation to herself. Participant 19, who was an administrator, commented on what she wished she had done differently in response to an employee's death, but her comments were made in relation to the living, "Probably should have interacted personally with faculty rather than leaving it to the Dept. Head."

Another way the **trauma** core category differed from the other types of losses discussed, is one participant indicated that the coworker's suicide was discovered by another coworker. In the case of the other instances, employee deaths were related by family members to the institution or the original notifier was not identified.

Discovery (one participant)

P8—He failed to show up for work, and a coworker responded to his residence and discovered the suicide.

Discovering the body of a coworker is a traumatic event. What makes this statement even more disturbing is that Participant 8 went on to say, "The top administrators never acknowledged [sic] the death. I was a little shocked that they never expressed concern for the other personnel in the department after this event." Participant 8 conveyed that the department was left to come to terms with the suicide on their own with at least two of the coworkers wondering if they could have somehow prevented the loss, 5 years after the death. The statement made by Participant 8 does reflect a theme that resonates across all the core categories and that is the failure of administration to take an active role in the death of an employee. It is consistent with the experiences and expressed desires of other participants related to administration.

The suicides from the other institution were much more recent, 6 months prior to the survey. There was no mention of upper administration interacting with the departments that experienced the loss and Participant 58 echoed what Participants 8 and 22 stated; the effects are still lingering.

Still Affected (one participant)

P58—Some are still affected by it months later.

Whereas two of the participants indicated that <u>some counseling was offered</u> there was no mention of counseling specific for traumatic loss or to address the long-term concerns associated with loss due to suicide. This is particularly concerning because in one instance the suicide was discovered by a coworker and in the other, "some are still affected months later."

<u>Some Counseling Offered</u> (two participants)

P22—The institution set up councling [sic] session for campus staff.

P58—We made sure they knew of counseling services.

Three is too small a sample size to draw conclusions from but the responses were different enough from the other responses; they deserved attention in this study. Other participants made recommendations ranging from hiring adjuncts for covering classes to how notification of a death should be handled. Only one of the participants recommended a <u>campuswide training</u> related to grief. Participant 58, one of three who dealt with the suicide of a coworker, made the recommendation related to grief education.

Campuswide training (one participant)

P58—I think some education for the campus would be nice. Letting folks know the importance of acknowledging that a death has occurred and that grieving is a natural part of the process.

The **trauma** core category warrants further investigation. Like the other participants who experienced a loss by suicide the participants in the **trauma** core category had to keep working, possibly without receiving the support and counseling they needed to address the loss. Unlike the other participants, at least two of the participants in

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the **trauma** core category received notification of the death of a colleague from a coworker who discovered the decedent when he failed to show for work.

Participant 11 also mentioned colleagues discovering other colleagues in the past but not as part of the recent losses she discussed related to the survey and she did not expand on the nature of the deaths, "In some cases, they did not show up for work as scheduled, so people had to go out to their homes where they were found." These types of experiences should cause genuine concern for the coworkers discovering their deceased colleagues, especially in the case of suicide or violent death. Without earlier intervention by professionals trained in trauma they could be candidates for posttraumatic stress (DeRanieri et al., 2002; Fox, 2012; Vivona & Ty, 2011).

Notification

P8—In my career field, I've dealt with death in many forms. Homicide, suicide, traffic fatalities, and natural causes. Regardless of the type of death, it is always permanent, and we should always remember the family members left behind. Delivering death messages is one of the hardest things I've ever had to do in my career. There is no easy way to do it.

One of the things that stood out right away from the initial surveys was that the manner in which people learned about the death of a coworker or colleague was very important and left a lasting impression. Notification was mentioned in 15 of the 20 initial surveys, even though none of the survey questions referred to notification. It is not surprising that people mentioned notification unsolicited. It would be the first action taken by the institution in relation to the death of an employee. People remember where they were when they learned shocking news.

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Participants reported that email was the most common form of notification, but the comments reflected that it was not the preferred modality.

Table 5. *Manner of Notification*

Manner of Notification	Number of Participants
Email	8
Phone call	3
Coworker	2
Text	1
Coworker Discovered	1

The way the participants spoke about their notification experiences was either neutral:

P6—I was notified by phone of my coworker's death and on other occasions by email, when the deaths were in another department or negative.

P24—Notification was done by email, which was inappropriate.

Only one participant reported that she had been grateful for the manner of notification:

P1—I was notified by my division dean by phone before she sent an email to the entire division. Although I was shocked to hear the news, I was grateful to have been told personally so I did not have to learn the news from an email.

The literature supports that the notification process is important but that the task usually falls to untrained managers (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; Jeffreys, 2005; Lynn, 2008; U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, 2013; Yost, 2013). Even individuals trained in death notification express sentiments similar to those from Participant 8, which appear at the beginning of the discussion of the **notification** core category (Stewart et al., 2000).

P8—Delivering death messages is one of the hardest things I've ever had to do in my career. There is no easy way to do it.

According to the participants there were two notification methods that caused a negative response on their part, notification by <u>email</u> and <u>text</u>

Email (three participants)

P42—In the case of my . . . coworker's death, the director . . . sent an email with the deceased's name as the subject line and a one-sentence announcement that she had died of a heart attack . . . Everyone was shocked and, frankly, hurt that he chose this method of sharing the sad news. I still feel some anger at him for this inconsiderate behavior almost six years later.

P24—The Director of the division where we worked informed us of the death by way of email. This should have been handled differennlty [sic] with more personal attention shown.

P2—I was notified of the death of my coworkers by a generic email from the division or dean

Text (one participant)

P14—I got a text about his death. I was in dismay.

Only three people received notification by phone call, and none of the three reported that it was a negative experience.

A follow-up question was formulated based on the category *preferred method of notification* and five variations emerged from the data <u>phone,</u> <u>phone tree,</u> <u>in person,</u> <u>email,</u> and that the <u>department experiencing the loss should be told first before the</u>

campus. Phone and phone tree were by far the preferred method with nine of the

participants indicating it was the best way to receive a death notification.

Phone and Phone Tree (nine participants)

P11—A personal phone call might be the best way to notify coworkers about the death of a colleague.

P3—Those who worked closest with the deceased at least need to be notified by phone.

P18—Close colleagues need to be notified as soon as possible, by the supervisor or another coworker, preferably by phone.

P2—In a large school, perhaps the Chairs or Deans would make personal phone calls or they could ask an established phone tree to make the calls.

In person (seven participants)

P8—Notification of an employee's death needs to be done face to face and with compassion and understanding.

P3—A face to face with those who directly worked with the deceased would be the preferred method of notification.

P24—Notification should be done in an informal meeting as soon as pragmatically possible.

P4—Face to face would be the preferred method of notification, when not possible by phone.

P58—Death notifications need to be made in person.

Email (five participants)

P33—Notification should be by email.

P16—Campuswide notification needs to come from the President in some form of electronic communication, like email because it will reach the most people the fastest.

P7—An email is the best form of notification. It needs to be sent out in a timely manner before the death appears on social media or in the news.

P42—An email notification should contain "sad news" in the subject line, including notifications that go campuswide.

Sixteen participants indicated that they preferred either a phone call or being notified in person. The University of South Australia (2017) supported this practice, "Immediate work colleagues should always be advised in person" (p 2) but as Participant 7 observed notification needs to be made "in a timely manner before the death appears on social media or in the news." Participant 18 agreed with Participant 7, "First, there is no best way, especially with today's instant media. One might find out via facebook [sic] or a tweet from another close friend or relative of the deceased." Participant 2 was more succinct, "A phone call would be the preferred method of notification but not always practical. Email is practical."

This preference poses a problem related to the next recommendation supported by the participants, the division experiencing the loss needs to be notified first before a campuswide announcement or statement is released to the media. It is highly unlikely the news of a death can be contained. As Participant 18 stated, "I was informed by one of my coworkers so when an email was sent I was already aware of the situation." That most likely is not unusual. Participant 6 learned about the death of a colleague through multiple text messages while he was on vacation in Alaska. However, 11 participants,

over half the study, indicated the division experiencing the loss needs to be notified first. The respondents were divided evenly with five from Darton State College and six from Valdosta State University expressing the same preference.

Division/Unit Experiencing the Loss Needs to be Notified First (11 participants)

P33—The department that experiences the loss should be notified before the university as a whole.

P3—The division that experienced the loss needs to be notified of the loss before the rest of the campus.

P42—Within a department or unit of the institution, I think people who were close to the deceased should be notified in person or by phone if at all possible. The larger community can be alerted by email.

In addition to expressing a preference for the manner of notification, participants also identified who the *notifiers* should be, with seven selecting department heads/supervisors and one indicating that notifiers need to be preauthorized to release information related to the loss. The University of South Australia (2017) supported this practice of department head/supervisors being the notifiers. Although they coordinate death notification through the Human Resources Department, Human Resources does not do the actual notification "The Head of School or Director is responsible for the initial communication to staff and should notify immediate colleagues as quickly as possible" (p. 2).

Department Heads/Supervisors (seven participants)

P12—Department heads should be designated to be the notifiers when there is a death in a department.

P19—The Dean should be the one to notify the department of the death of a colleague. The Dean and the next level of administration can work together if needed on notification.

P6—Ideally the worker's immediate supervisor should telephone bereaved colleagues.

One participant expressed concern about the problems that can arise when notification is delayed, indicating that waiting for authorization can cause problems. This could be considered a recommendation for planning ahead of time for the possibility of an employee's death.

Preauthorized (one participant)

P18—The employer should have a process that is in place and the authority to mass communicate to all employees of a death of a coworker should happen as soon as and as quickly as reasonable [sic] possible. Silence only allows the spreading of the notification to cause more problems.

Participant 18 echoed the practice that is currently employed at UC Berkeley, where there is a checklist and a timeline related to responding to an employee death. At UC Berkeley, a departmental coordinator is appointed from the same department as the deceased colleague. The coordinator is not only authorized but is expected to make death notifications within 24 hours of a death being confirmed and coordinate with an appointed person in the chancellor's office (University Health Services, 2017).

In addition to the departmental notifications, six participants indicated that there should also be notification at the <u>campuswide</u> level and handled by <u>upper administration</u> or the <u>president</u>.

Campuswide: Upper Administration (three participants)

P11—Upper administration should provide an official announcement about arrangements and be the leaders in expressing the community's sympathy.

P7—Administration should take an active role to let us know they care enough to keep us in the loop. They should be coordinating any appropriate measures—notifications to the campus employees.

<u>Campuswide: President</u> (three participants)

P2—Notification should come from administration, preferably the President, it should include students and it should be personal, not generic.

P16—Campuswide notification needs to come from the President in some form of electronic communication, like email because it will reach the most people the fastest.

Participant 2 included students among those who need to be notified. The student theme is seen throughout the participants' responses, from both institutions, in all but the **trauma** core category. Participant 3, a dean, indicated that part of the notification process includes the students in the deceased professor's class, "I also had to process the best way to broach the subject with students."

Participant 3 introduced the next logical step in responding to the death of an employee; work must go on. "As the dean, I immediately had to go into "work mode". I had to be sure that classes were covered when students returned the following week."

After notification the next course of action would concern work. What does the
institution do to manage grief, reassign the duties of the deceased, and maintain the same
level of productivity it had prior to the loss?

Core Category 3: Work

The **work** core category covers responses related to the workplace following the
death of a coworker and includes *four categories* and 17 subcategories. The **work** core
category highlights the dimensions of grief at work, the effects the deaths had on
productivity, how work was reassigned, the experience when classes had to be
reassigned, opinions on hiring adjuncts to cover classes, and the overall experience of
grief at work following a death.

Grief

The *grief* category covers the expressions of *grief* in the workplace directly
related to work following a death. In the first category participants shared their grief
experiences, which showed a wide range of how grief was experienced on an individual
level. The experiences that were shared were wide and varied, which is why three
variations were identified, demonstrating that grief is not a linear process, with no set
timeline, and that people grieve in their own way (Rando, 1993; Roos, 2012; Sunoo &
Solomon, 2001; Topper, 2008). The variations showed the dimensions of the personal
responses, related to the actual loss, the implications for the workplace, and identified life
lessons related to the loss. The *grief* category had the widest range of responses from the
participants.

In the experience subcategory eight participants, evenly divided between the two
institutions, shared their personal response to the death of a coworker. They shared how

the loss affected them personally, made them reflective, and how they were reminded of their lost colleague and two of them shared the commonality of still being affected years later.

Personal (eight responses)

P1—Every time I saw his empty office and walked into his classroom, I was reminded that he was not there.

P33—I was shocked and saddened because we had worked closely for 15 years.

P58—One cannot help but think about the last contact with the person.

P2—As I type this, I can barely see for the tears and death occurred almost two years ago.

P24—I was devastated, six years later, I still expect him to show up one day "just back from vacation."

Five participants gave insight into the forced nature of the dual process model (Stroebe & Schutt, 1999) in academia. Because work must continue they had to engage in restorative processes and two shared that they did not have time to address their own grief related to the loss.

Workplace Implications (five responses)

P14—When your supervisor dies once the initial shock passes, the next thought is "Oh shit, what happens now?"

P3—I took no time to grieve because I had to go into work mode immediately.

P4—I didn't reach out this time. Why? Plain and simple, I was overwhelmed with work.

Four other participants explained how the loss of a colleague made them reflective about life.

Life Lesson (four responses)

P12—Losing a colleague makes you realize that there is more to life than our careers.

P16—It was a reminder of the brevity of life.

P18—Not only do I look to the day I am taken to heaven, I feel good for those who get to go before me.

Participant 18's response about feeling "good for those who get to go before me" was a variation not seen in other responses. Although Participant 4 made mention of discussing "matters of faith" with the deceased he did not share the same feelings related to feeling "good for those who get to go before me." Participant 18 went on to discuss how he knows his belief system may be "hard to understand." The literature supports that employees who do not reflect the cultural norms or share the predominant religion of the institution can experience a sense of isolation when there is an employee death (Stein & Cropanzano, 2011; Taylor, 2007). Participant 18 exemplified this by explaining,

For me personally, it bothers me more to be told how sorry one is for 'my loss' because of my view of death is a good event for the person who dies, yes, as long as they are a believer . . . Yes, for many this is hard to understand and for a counsel [sic] who does not, I personally feel they could actually do more damage than good, for many don't understand this view.

The next subcategory, related to the impact the loss had on the employees as a group did not have the variation seen in the personal category. The participants focused

on grief as a group experience in the workplace with 13 participants referencing the response to the death at a departmental to campuswide level. The most commonly used word was variations of the word "shock" which was used 22 times by 13 people, followed by "sad" or "saddened," used by 10 participants, and "upset," used by five. Although some spoke of their own shock or sadness, the most common response was as a shared experience (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; Fox, 2012; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; McGuinness, 2007; Turner, 2012). The responses also reflected the need to engage in restorative processes because of the nature of the job. Participant 4 even referred to some being "mechanical" but still performing the required duties. They engaged in actions in order to keep the institution running, in spite of being in shock.

Group Experience (13 participants)

P24—The universal reaction was shock and dismay.

P4—We seemed to be dazed and sometimes mechanical in our duties.

P11—People did their jobs but they were often in a state of shock/sadness.

P12—Everyone was upset and emotional.

P19—Employees were upset but supported each other and interacted with the family of the deceased.

Although there were comments related to colleagues supporting each other with the other losses, Participant 19 stated, "Employees were upset but supported each other and interacted with the family of the deceased." That sentiment did not appear in any of the statements made by those who had experienced the loss by suicide, in the **trauma** core category. Instead of signs of supporting each other Participant 58 commented,

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"Many employees went home for the day" and followed up with, "Some were still affected months later."

Productivity

Participants were asked specifically about the impact the loss had on the productivity in the workplace in the initial survey. The literature indicates that workplace productivity suffers due to errors, absenteeism, impaired concentration, and an increase in drug and alcohol use (Charles-Edwards, 2005; Jeffreys, 2005; O'Connor et al., 2010; Pawlecki, 2010; Pyrillis, 2016; Silberman, et al., 2006; Sunoo & Solomon, 2001; Thompson, 2009). There was no consensus from the participants related to the impact on productivity with nine stating that productivity did not suffer, six who indicated productivity did suffer, and one who was unsure. This is an instance where the self-selecting nature of the study may have affected the responses received. Although there was no mention of errors, absenteeism, or drug and alcohol use, the employees who might have reported those things may have self-selected out of the study.

Of the nine participants who reported that productivity did not suffer, eight were from Darton State College, and seven of them discussed the death of a faculty member. None of the respondents reported a negative impact on productivity following the death of teaching faculty. Participant 8 indicated that productivity did not suffer because it could not suffer, harkening back to the dual process model. In some instances individuals had to focus on restorative processes, whether or not they wanted to or were ready to (Stroebe & Schutt, 1999). There is also the possibility that "productivity" might be hard to quantify in academia. Meetings attended, classes taught, assignments graded, and

reports completed may qualify as being productive but determining the timeliness and quality of those activities would be difficult to determine.

Productivity Did Not Suffer (nine participants)

P1, P2, P3, P4, P6—The workplace was sad at times but productivity did not suffer.

P2—From my perspective, as someone who had to take on an additional class, I do not believe that productivity suffered.

P12—People were morose, there were several conversations related to "the place won't be the same" but there was no noticeable slow-down in work.

P8—Decision making and productivity were not effected [sic] due to the nature of the job—we have to keep going regardless.

Five of the six participants who responded that productivity did suffer were from Valdosta State University, and none of them discusses the death of a faculty member. The one who was unsure was also from Valdosta State. Many gave reasons why productivity suffered and they all overlapped with other core categories, categories, and subcategories. Participant 42 singled out the insensitivity of the manner of **notification** of a coworker's death as the reason for the slowdown in productivity, "The inconsiderate manner of notification lead to a departmental malaise that lasted for weeks and hurt productivity." Participants 22 and 58, who lost coworkers to suicide, from the **trauma** core category, reported a slowdown. Participant 22 said, "Productivity slowed down because a lot of the officers were close to the officer who died."

As was stated earlier, none of the respondents indicated there was a slowdown in productivity following the death of a faculty member; the death of an administrator

generated different responses and a range of responses from productivity slowing down to being uncertain because of the level of efficiency of the administrator who died.

Productivity Did Suffer (six participants)

P26—The death of the administrator certainly slowed down decision-making and productivity on some fronts.

P11—With the loss of the administrator, some decision-making and productivity slowed due to tracing the status of projects and having to reassign responsibilities on an interim basis.

Unsure

P32—Hard to say how productivity was impacted because he was such an effective leader.

Perhaps it is easier to step in for a faculty member because people in the same department teach the same classes or have in the past. Departments maintain copies of the syllabi and book orders for each class. Faculty members must also meet specific credentialing requirements in order to assume a class. A professor of public administration cannot assume a colleague's class in world history. When a faculty member dies, the immediate need is to get classes covered for a finite period of time, just until the end of the semester. When it comes to administration, the higher up the loss is in the organizational chart, the fewer people there are at the institution with the same qualifications, experiences, or knowledge of the department and that loss impacts more individuals. The death of someone in upper administration can have long reaching implications and effect numerous departments in a university. Participant 14 stated, in

relation to the loss of an administrator, "The division this person lead has been in a leadership spiral since his death. It still hasn't recovered 5 years later."

Productivity is very subjective. There is a possibility that the ones who reported that productivity did not suffer were wrong, since they gave their perspective. In the case of the suicide, Participant 8 reported that productivity did not suffer because of the nature of the department but Participant 22, from the same department, discussing the same death, indicated productivity did suffer. It could just come down to an individual definition of productivity and a certain amount of introspection by the participants. Participant 8 may have known his productivity did not change and believed the rest of the department functioned like he did. Participant 22 may have known that his productivity did suffer and believed the rest of the department functioned like he did.

Reassignment of Work

Another difference materialized in the loss of a faculty member as opposed to staff or administration in the fourth category, Reassignment of Work, because the loss of faculty gave surviving employees a focus: the students. The faculty and administrators could make deliberate actions to resolve the problem of covering courses and help the students finish the semester. Seven participants, six from Darton and one from Valdosta, highlighted the importance of students, even if they were not directly affected by the death of a faculty member. They were able to take action, by being able to teach a class and assign meaning to their actions by honoring their deceased colleague.

<u>Student Focus</u> (seven participants)

P3—The important thing was that classes were covered by the time students returned.

P19—People stepped up to serve the students and grieving colleagues carried on for the students' sake.

P33—A department is a team and the department should pitch in for the students.

P3—The sudden death of the faculty member created a void that had to be filled to meet the needs of students.

P1—The important thing was that the students suffered as little as possible.

A variation of being student focused was seen in the responses of seven participants who found meaning in being able to honor their deceased colleague by covering his/her class. Six of the seven were from Darton, and three of them had actually assumed the class of a deceased colleague. This assignment of meaning was not echoed with the loss of an administrator. No one mentioned it being an honor to cover the duties of a deceased administrator.

<u>Honor to Cover Classes</u> (seven participants)

P1—It was a challenge but also an honor to assume my colleague's class.

P3—Colleague's [sic] being able to cover the deceased's classes can be a gift to that person's memory.

P18—I definitely think out of respect for not only the deceased by [sic] for the close friend, they may feel that taking the class would be their way of honoring the colleague. . . . In fact, the close friend my [sic] be offended if they were not offered to honor their colleague, for after all, they would have done it for me.

There was only one participant whose response appeared to be a contradiction with others related to <u>honoring</u> the fallen colleague and <u>focusing on the students</u>. Participant 4 reported that <u>assuming a class was upsetting</u> but his response reflected more of an extreme dimension of focusing on the students and wanting to honor his colleague's memory.

<u>Assuming a Class Was Upsetting</u> (one participant)

P4—I thought assuming a class was a way to help and to honor my colleague but I was unprepared for the emotional impact it would have on me.

<u>Student focus</u>

P4—While students told me in their course evaluations or in my office they appreciated how I handled the transition, I don't think a professor emotionally breaking down in class was probably the best for them. It is important for students to have a professor assume a class who is emotionally detached from the situation.

Where reassignment of work was straight forward in the loss of a faculty member, it was <u>unclear</u> or not addressed with the loss of an administrator. With the reassignment of a class, the respondents gave dimensions to that category ranging from focusing on the students, honoring a colleague's memory, and for one being emotionally overwhelming. There was really one dimension with the loss of an administrator and that was people worked to figure out what needed to be done. The reassignment of work associated with the loss of an administrator was <u>unclear</u> as related by five participants, and all five were from Valdosta State University.

<u>Unclear</u> (five participants)

P33—Critical issues were expedited but other things put on hold.

P36—Hard to say how [productivity] was impacted because he was such an effective leader.

P58—With the loss of an administrator, people need to access emails, documents, and appointments. Even with those materials, people may not be able to reconstruct the planned actions.

Hiring Adjuncts

Participant 4, who was the only one to express regret related to assuming a class, was emphatic about the need to hire adjuncts to cover the classes of a fallen colleague. His comment was such a departure from the other responses, a question was added to the follow up survey about hiring adjuncts to cover classes. He reiterated his stance on the follow up survey, where again he proved to be the only one who expressed that opinion.

Need to Hire Adjuncts (one participant)

P4—I can't stress enough that I feel it is an error to have coworkers assume the classes of their fallen colleague. This is especially true if they work closely together. If the "substitute professor" was an adjunct who didn't know him well that wouldn't be an issue. Now, I know that some professors might be able to handle it emotionally; obviously not all people respond the same way. However, I'm also concerned that many professors would say, "Yes, I can handle it," because they want to help or they want to honor their colleague, but they are underestimating the emotion toll.

The follow up produced the same results, with Participant 4 falling at the extreme end of the dimension of wanting to honor his colleague's memory but finding it too emotionally difficult. Other participants agreed that no one should be forced to cover a

class and should have <u>the right to refuse</u>. They also indicated that hiring adjuncts was <u>not a simple process</u> when needing to cover a colleague's class with little time to accomplish that task. Once again the responses reflected the focus on meeting the needs of the students and the responses were nearly evenly split between the institutions.

<u>Not a Simple Process</u> (seven participants)

P1—Hiring adjuncts to cover classes on short notice is not a simple process.

P3—Time is the enemy. Classes must be covered. There can be no down time for students.

P12—Hiring adjuncts to cover classes on short notice is not a simple process and there might not be any adjuncts available.

P16—Hiring an adjunct or faculty member takes time.

P33—Hiring adjuncts is not a simple process and in a rural environment it might be difficult to find one with the required specialization.

The need to cover classes is immediate, and those in the department are already familiar with the institution and quite possibly the class they are being asked to cover. Although six agreed with the statement that hiring adjuncts was not simple, they also added that faculty should have the <u>right to refuse</u> covering a colleague's class without repercussions.

<u>Right to Refuse</u> (6 participants)

P6—The colleagues of the deceased should have the right to refuse without fearing repercussions from administrators and supervisors.

P42—but it should obviously be done sensitively, and the administrator should be clear that this is optional and should be prepared to hire from outside if needed.

P2—If the colleague can't or doesn't want to, she/he should have the option to decline to teach another's class. Then by all means, offer the classes to someone else like an adjunct.

P2—Colleagues are the best choice for assuming a deceased professor's classes because of familiarity with the class and division. Adjuncts would not have this advantage.

Three participants continued with the concept of it being an honor to cover a colleague's classes and that hiring adjuncts would deny faculty that experience.

Honor to Cover Classes (four participants)

P19—Some faculty will want to honor their colleague and help students adjust by assuming the classes of the deceased.

P11—Many professors might find it meaningful to take over a class for a deceased colleague.

P1—I felt like I was doing it for my colleague and I liked that part.

Participant 58 offered a suggestion that would require planning ahead for the possible death of a faculty member. She suggested that cooperative agreements could be negotiated with neighboring institutions before a death occurred.

Cooperative Agreements (one participant)

P58—Perhaps cooperatives could be established with other institutions regarding supplying professors to cover the classes of a deceased professor at a neighboring institution.

Although the pros and cons of having adjuncts teach courses of deceased faculty was discussed by the participants, nothing similar was said in reference to the loss of an

administrator. There was no assigning meaning of serving the students or honoring a fallen colleague, the focus was on trying to figure out what needed to be done with no level of certainty.
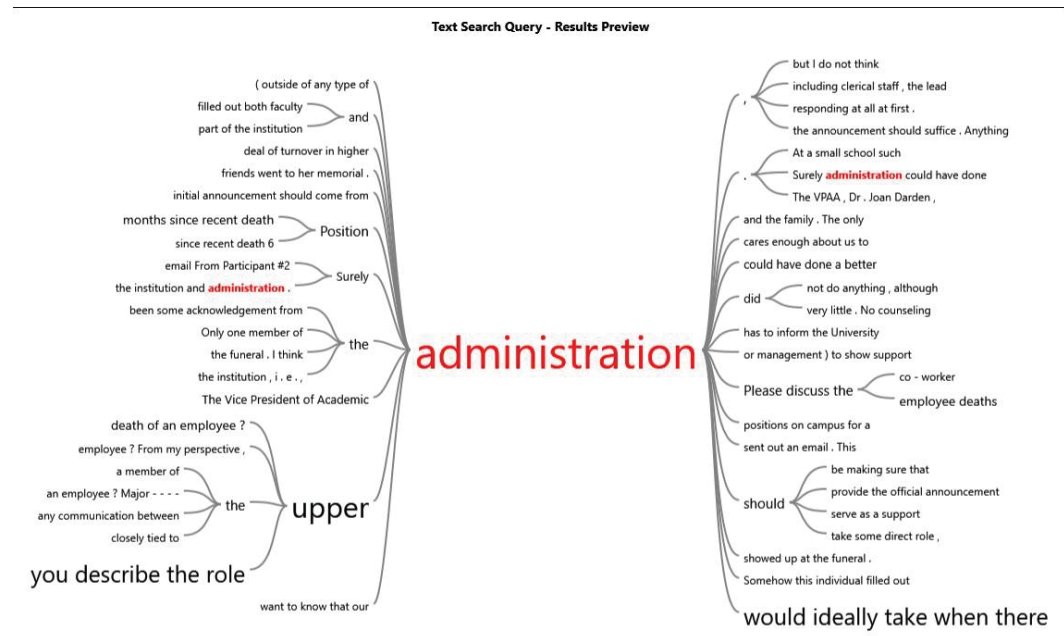
Figure 2. Administration Word Tree

Central Category Administration

As has already been shown, administration has played a prominent role related to the categories of *reassigning work* and *hiring adjuncts* and the entire **notification** core category related to how administration should handle the notification of faculty and staff, regarding the death of an employee. Administration showed up by way of its absences in the **trauma** core category when Participant 8 observed, "The top administrators never acknowledged [sic] the death."

The role of administration was the most consistent theme throughout the surveys. Eighteen of the 20 participants mentioned administration; the term "administration" and variants were used 73 times. The "administration" word tree (Figure 2) shows the scope

of comments made by the participant related to administration. It is easy to pick up on the fact that many of the comments are quite prescriptive. The "should" trail, related to what administration "should do," is readily identifiable on the right hand side of the figure and includes "be making sure that," "provide the initial announcement," "serve as a support" and "take a direct role."

In contrast, the word tree for the word "shocking," which was the second most used word, only appeared 29 times in the transcript. That is a stark contrast to the word "administration," which was used 73 times. A mere 13 users used the term "shocking" or a variant regarding their reaction to the death of a colleague. It becomes easy to ascertain how **Administration** emerged from the data as the central category in this study.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) there are six criteria for choosing a central category. Having reached this point in the results section, one only need scan the list to see that **administration** meets the criteria:

1. It must be central; that is, all other major categories can be related to it.

2. It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all or almost all cases, there are indicators pointing to that concept.

3. The explanation that evolves by relating the categories is logical and consistent. There is no forcing of data.

4. The name or phrase use to describe the central category should be sufficiently abstract that it can be used to do the research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of more general theory.

5. As the concept is refined analytically through integration with other concepts, the theory grows in depth and explanatory power.

6. The concept is able to explain variation as well as the main point made by the data; that is, when conditions vary, the explanation still holds, although the way in which a phenomenon is expressed might look somewhat different. One also should be able to explain contradictory or alternative cases in terms of that central idea. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 147)

It really should come as no surprise that **administration** proved to be the central category because of the hierarchical nature of academia. This is especially true with the growth of administration over faculty during the past decade or two (June 2017; Parr 2014; Rogers 2012). There are multiple layers of administration at a college or university including directors, chairs, deans, vice presidents, provosts, and the president. Frequently, there are even more layers with additional designations of "co-" or "assistant," as in cochair or assistant provost or assistant vice president. This multiplicity made for an interesting pattern that emerged from the data.

When the surveys were filled out, it was up to the participants to choose a designation of staff, faculty, or administrator. Although the participants appeared to be evenly divided with 10 faculty and staff and 10 administrators, there was one individual who identified as "staff" even though his actual designation was more than likely administration as he had direct reports and could hire or discipline subordinates. However, he was at the lowest level of the administrative hierarchy and looked to his superiors for response to the loss in his department. Therefore, he self-identified as staff.

This was seen with almost all of the administrators who participated in the study. All of them looked for direction further up the hierarchy, including a provost, who referenced her equals and the president:

P 19: I did interact with my superior and those on my level. None participated in

any activities or consoled the faculty to the best of my knowledge. Not sure if I

continued to cajole them if they would have done more or not.

Administration not only proved to be multifaceted with its many layers but with

the types of losses and responses. Because this was a grounded theory study with self-

selecting participants, what the data would return was not predictable. The researcher had

general, preconceived notions about possible disruptions to work, confusion, and grief

but had no way of anticipating that the participants from Darton State would almost

exclusively discuss the deaths of faculty and that the participants from Valdosta State

would almost exclusively discuss the deaths of administrators and never faculty. Those

differences derailed the plan of comparing how the two institutions responded to the

death of an employee because they did not have equivalent types of losses.

However, because the participants were equally divided between faculty and staff

and administration, it did allow for comparisons to be made based on role at the

institutions. It also made it possible to see the differences in the responses to the type of

loss as in a faculty member, as opposed to the loss of an administrator. It was also

possible to identify the experiences of administrators who had to deal with a loss and the

assessment by the subordinates who evaluated the response of administration.

Something else proved interesting about the administrators who participated in the

survey. Only three administrators were directly impacted by the death of a coworker or

subordinate. The other seven administrators either experienced the death of an

administrator above them or of the same rank or a death in another department not related

to their department. Even so, the three administrators provided a rich perspective of their

experiences dealing with the death of an employee, which made for an interesting contrast to the responses of those outside of administration.

Even though the three core categories directly relate to the central category of **administration**, there were data unique to administration that gave more insight into the experience of losing an employee in an academic workplace. The data for the central category produced four categories and the most subcategories of any of the core categories with 20. **Notification** is its own core category but the category *notifiers should be* and the subcategories contained within overlap with *administrators should* in the **administration** central category.

Experience of Administrators

The first category concerns the *experience of administrators* and echoes much of what appears in the literature. Managers are untrained and unprepared to address the death of an employee; they are tasked with keeping the workplace running, while not thinking of themselves, frequently not feeling they have all that they need from higher ups, and having to <u>drop everything</u> to keep their department running (DeRanieri et al., 2002; Jeffreys, 2005; Lynn, 2008; Maxim & Mackavey, 2005; Yost, 2013). There is also overlap with the category <u>focus on the student</u> from the **work** core category.

<u>Drop Everything</u> (three participants)

P11—With the loss of faculty, an administrator must drop everything else to handle transitional issues related to getting classes covered.

P11—With faculty, Immediate [sic] efforts had to go into ensuring remaining classroom responsibilities were handled and student needs met.

P3—I had to go into work mode to ensure classes were covered and determine how to notify students.

P19—The important thing was that classes were covered by the time students returned

One participant gave insight into the experience of being a notifier, which overlaps with the **work** core category. She was not able to address her grief due to having to work on notification. The administrator had to engage in a multilevel process to notify people of the loss and did so without direction from higher up. She started with close colleagues, the department, and then the VPAA, and students.

Notifier (1 Participant)

P3—After the initial shock, my first response was to contact colleagues who worked directly with the deceased. Secondly, I contacted the entire department via email since we were on spring break and most faculty were gone. Finally, I contacted the VPAA so that she could inform the college.

P3—I also had to process the best way to broach the subject with students.

Three administrators spoke about offering support but not one talked about receiving support from upper level administration.

P19—I did interact with my superior and those on my level. None participated in any activities or consoled the faculty to the best of my knowledge. Not sure if I continued to cajole them if they would have done more or not.

Offered Support (three participants)

P3—I was so worried about my faculty and students that I took no time for myself.

P58—I shared my support with the departments affected.

P19—I did speak with some faculty by phone and at the funeral service.

Attended Funeral or Spoke With Family (two participants)

P14— I did all I could with the family later after I returned home.

P19—I sent sympathy cards to survivors and attended most visitations and
funerals.

Two administrators echoed the literature in indicating they took no time for
themselves due to being focused on the needs of others and their department (Grant &
Wade-Benzoni, 2009; Kinder & Cooper, 2009).

No Time for Self (two participants)

P3—I took no time to grieve because I had to go into work mode immediately

P11—It can be very hard to deal with the professional responsibilities on top of
the personal shock at an unexpected death.

Response of Administration

Although there were only three administrators who had to directly address the loss
of a subordinate, many spoke about how losses were handled by administration. In most
cases, one would expect to see two categories evaluating the responses as either being
positive or negative. There were negative observations, which were very specific in their
criticism and lengthy at times. Participant 16 had a somewhat positive tone in her
response. All the other respondents listed what administration did as neither good nor
bad, which is why the two categories identified were response of administration as
negative and not negative. Three of the not negative comments mentioned that counseling
was offered and that was the extent of their comments on administration.

(five participants)

P16—The university handled the death as well as any institution could respond to such an event.

P42—the campus community was allowed to attend the funeral a few days later. It seemed I felt as though it was handled as smoothly as possible.

P36—Counseling was encouraged if needed.

P22—The institution provided counseling.

P58—The departments were made aware counseling was available.

Eight participants perceived the response of administration in a negative light. They were very specific in their criticism and wrote substantially more than the ones who were neutral on the response of administration. Something interesting to note about Participant 42, she compared the response of the institution to the death of an upper level administrator to the response of her direct supervisor in the death of a coworker. Her somewhat positive comment in this section, "It was handled as smoothly as possible" contrasts with the one she makes in the next section, "I wish the director had had a sense of compassion and empathy."

Negative (eight participants**)**

P2—After the first shock of the deaths had come and gone, the second shock came. It was the shock of the impersonal delivery and handling the funeral services on the part of the institution and administration. Surely administration could have done a better job in all areas from announcements to release time and travel accommodations. Everything was so impersonal and unemotional. It was

business as usual around here. It was like an institution of higher learning can't express loss, sadness or anything.

P8—The top administrators never acknowledged [sic] the death. I was a little shocked that they never expressed concern for the other personnel in the department after this event.

P24—This should have been handled differennlty [sic] with more personal attention shown. I considered the employee a close, special friend.

P42—I wish the director had had a sense of compassion and empathy toward the people who worked for him; he showed no awareness in either case of how impersonal and uncaring his means of communication came across. There was a great deal of resentment at the…director who shared the news so bluntly.

P19—I felt more compassion could have been shown in all cases.

The negative reactions showed overlap with the **notification** core category, with the negative responses to emails received regarding the death of an employee. Employees want to see indications that upper administration cares, which is detailed in the _administration should_ category. As Maxim & Mackavey (2005) reported, managers did not identify addressing grief in the workplace as something they needed to know how to do. Managers do not know that they do not know.

Loss of an Administrator

The negative impression of an administration's response to loss was deliberately juxtaposed to the experience of the _loss of an administrator_. Much has already been covered about the loss of a faculty member related to productivity and hiring adjuncts, but in all the responses no one touched on the long-term implications for the loss of a

faculty member. Participant 1 summed it up best about having to assume a colleague's

class, "I knew it was for a limited time." Such was not the case with the loss of an

administrator. What administrators do is not time limited to a semester, and for

administrators higher up the organizational chart, the loss is felt by the entire university

and not just the department. One of the institutions lost a very popular provost

unexpectedly, and six participants discussed the long-term impact his death has had on

the institution, with the subcategories of the loss leaving the department in turmoil for

years and loss of productivity emerging from the data.

Turmoil for Years (three participants)

P14—The division this person led has been in a leadership spiral since his death.

It still hasn't recovered 5 years later.

P42—The death of the provost lead to a high level of uncertainty and a high rate

of turnover in upper administration for years to come.

P16—Replacing this individual has been a difficult, ongoing, and problematic

process.

The loss of productivity category was different from the one under the

productivity theme in the **work** core category. With the death of a faculty or staff

member, there were no questions raised as to what needed to be done as a reason for the

loss of productivity. There were no extreme statements as to how productivity suffered.

Participant 16's response to how the death of an administrator impacted productivity was

succinct and consisted of one word, "Badly."

<u>Loss of Productivity</u> (four participants)

P33—With the loss of the administrator, some decision-making and productivity slowed. The president may have appointed an interim too quickly.

P11—With the loss of the administrator, some decision-making and productivity slowed due to tracing the status of projects and having to reassign responsibilities on an interim basis.

P11—With administrators, the immediate needs may not be so clear-cut; however, in a busy office, not everyone may know the status of different projects, actions, etc.

Upper Administration Should

As the data were examined and coded from a different perspective, using the Word Tree feature of Nvivo 11 (Figure 2), **administration** as the central category became obvious. Everything revolved around administration. For this reason, the category *upper administration should* is presented slightly differently from the others. This was the only category that emerged that focused on a particular role at the institution, administration. There were no "faculty should" or "staff should" statements made by the participants, only administration. However, in response to the question "What do you wish had been done differently" many focused on the response of upper administration, so that it became a question on the follow up survey. A pattern emerged that showed in some instances, faculty and staff were on one side as to what they thought upper administration should do and administration did not share the same observations. For this reason, it was decided to divide the responses of faculty and staff from administration. It was interesting to see the subcategories where there were similar

suggestions, but also the ones that were heavily represented by one side and not the other. The first category concerned upper administration showing that they care. Showing compassion contradicts Bauer's (2012) description of workplaces as "rational, productive, and controlled environments" (p. 42). However, showing that they care was mentioned by half of the participants and evenly distributed between administrators and faculty and staff.

Should Show They Care (10 participants)

Administration (five participants)

P24—Sympathy, empathy, sincere offer of support, counseling.

P58—Upper administration needs to show that they care.

P19—They should send condolences to the family & faculty.

Faculty/Staff (five participants)

P6—Upper administration should convey empathy to bereaved colleagues and students. The President needs to acknowledge the individual's passing.

P42—The director needed to show compassion and empathy toward the people who worked for him.

P26—More support. Time for talk.

However, one administrator cautioned about administration coming off as disingenuous with forced compassion. This sentiment was not expressed by faculty or staff but was reflected in the literature (Hallin & Gustavsson, 2009) that if expressions of grief or compassion are expected, their genuineness can be called into question.

No Forced Compassion (one participant)

Administration (one participant)

P12—It depends on the relationship. It often comes off as disingenuous when an administrator attempts to provide comfort to the community when they did not have a relationship with the person.

Seven indicated there should be counseling offered, three faculty and staff and four administrators.

Offer Counseling (seven participants)

Administration (four participants)

P24—Administration needs to make counseling available.

P58—Upper administration should be making sure that appropriate counseling and support groups are made available.

Faculty/Staff (3 participants)

P42—Short term grief counseling should be offered if possible.

P4—Being given an opportunity to meet as a division and talk about our loss was helpful.

The one category in *upper administration should* that generated the most responses but the greatest difference in number of responses between faculty and staff and administration was the *upper administration should* take an active role subcategory. Twelve participants commented on this, but only four administrators as opposed to eight faculty/staff. The faculty/staff responses had somewhat more of an emotional tone. Where the administrative responses came across as suggestions, the ones from

faculty/staff contained emotional statements like "let us know they care enough" and "realize how this may affect many employees,"

Take an Active Role (12 participants)

Administration (four participants)

P19—Administration should schedule a meeting with faculty to discuss their needs.

P3—Upper administration should take an active role when there is a death, especially in the division where the death occurred.

P11—They should also be the leaders in expressing the community's sympathy.

Faculty/Staff (eight participants)

P4—Administration needs to take an active role, especially in the division that experienced the loss, show empathy and ask what is needed.

P7—Administration should take an active role to let us know they care enough to keep us in the loop.

P8—They should take charge and realize how this may affect many employees, instead of continuing their day-to-day business.

P16—Upper administration must take an active role. They must notify the university community and sometimes plan a memorial service.

P1—I think the administration should take some direct role, if not with the whole campus, at least with the division.

The next two categories, decisions at division level and treat deceased employees the same, share one thing in common: Neither were represented in the responses made by administrators, only faculty. The concept of allowing some decision-making to occur at

the division or departmental level is reflected in the literature. The University of South

Australia (2017), UC Berkeley (University Health Services, 2017), and the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service (2013) have checklists for how to respond to the death of an employee

and tasks assigned by position. Some of those tasks would fall to the equivalent of

directors, chairs, or deans in an academic environment, such as notification.

<u>Decisions at Division Level</u> (three participants)

<u>Faculty/Staff</u> (three participants)

P1—It was important for decisions to be made at the division level.

P33—If the deceased was a member of the faculty or staff, the department should

take a lead role.

P18—However, there should be no hesitation on the part of the employer to notify

all employees as soon a reasonable. Waiting to 'get permission' or 'who should be

told first' is only asking for problems.

<u>Administration</u> (no participants)

<u>Treat all Employees the Same</u> (three participants)

<u>Faculty and Staff</u> (three participants)

P7—Whatever standards are set, administration needs to follow for all employee

deaths, not just people in "visible positions."

P8—All lives are valuable, not just the highest paid personnel on campus. Do the

same for a member of the custodial staff as you would for a vice-president.

P33—If the deceased is a member of the upper administration, including clerical

staff, the lead administrator of that office or division should take the lead in

informing appropriate personnel, communicating the wishes of the deceased's

family and attend whatever services are arranged.

Administration (no participants)

The next category concerns permitting funeral attendance and memorials; both are

addressed in the literature and are not simple decisions. On one hand funerals and

memorials can be important parts of the grieving process (Fox, 2012; MADD, n.d.;

Perreault, 2011; Topper, 2008; Turner, 2012; U.S, Fish and Wild Life Service, 2013). At

the same time, organizations need to recognize that there are different cultural beliefs

(Perreault, 2011; Stein & Cropanzano, 2011; Taylor, 2007), the wishes of the deceased's

family need to be respected (Kinder & Cooper, 2009), and that decisions need to be made

related to employees being expected to use leave time to attend funerals or memorials

(Liberty Mutual, 2012; Perreault, 2011).

Allow Memorials and Funeral Attendance (three participants)

Administration (one participant)

P3—Upper administration should allow employees to attend funerals, have

memorials, and interact with the family of the deceased.

Faculty/Staff (three participants)

P42—Coworkers should be able to attend the funeral of the deceased without

having to use sick or annual leave.

P16—The memorial services that have been held have been touching. It is

important that the University hold such services to show the family how much the

person was valued.

P2—I would like to see another and better way of announcing the deaths and the handling of accommodations for the funerals.

The final category in the *upper administration should* concerns having a policy or preplanning related to the death of a coworker. Participants from both institutions made suggestions about the need to be prepared for loss in order for there to be a smooth transition, access to needed information, preauthorized notification, provide campuswide education, and form cooperative agreements prior to an actual death occurring.

Policy or Preplanning Before Death (Administration, three participants)

P11—With the loss of a faculty member, administrators need to be prepared so that they can work to provide as seamless a transition as possible for students. They need access to syllabi, gradebooks, and other course materials.

P11—With the loss of an administrator, people need access emails, documents, and appointments. Even with those materials, people may not be able to reconstruct the planned actions.

P3—There should be policy related to responding to the death of a coworker

P58—I think some education for the campus would be nice. Letting folks know the importance of acknowledging that a death has occurred and that grieving is a natural part of the process.

P58—Perhaps cooperatives could be established with other institutions regarding supplying professors to cover the classes of a deceased professor at a neighboring institution.

<u>Policy or Preplanning Before Death</u> (two faculty participants)

P1—There should be policy related to responding to the death of a coworker. This is a difficult situation to deal with, but it happens on a regular basis. There should be a policy for dealing with it. I don't get any sense that there is such a policy.

P18-Administration should have processes in place to allow mass communication of an employee death as soon as reasonably possible. Silence only allows the notification to be spread through the grapevine and cause more problems.

Even though only five directly referenced the need for preparation or a policy concerning the death of a colleague, the word "should" was used 55 times, by 17 of the 20 participants and many of those statements could translate into preplanning or formulation of policy related to hiring adjuncts, how **notification** is handled, interactions with family and the campus, making counseling available, and allowing for funeral attendance and for memorials.

P4—I think in the future the college should attempt to find adjuncts or professors from a nearby institution to take over the classes.

P11—Upper administration should provide the official announcement about arrangements.

P18—They should send condolences to the family & faculty. They should schedule a mtg with the faculty to discuss their needs. They should make counseling available.

P42—I also think that persons who wish to attend a funeral or memorial service for a deceased colleague should be allowed to without having to use sick or annual leave.

P3—Upper administration should serve as a support to the department that

suffered the loss. That could include allowing everyone in the department to

attend a memorial service, assisting with finding faculty to assume classes,

offering counseling/counselors to the impacted area, being open to opportunities

to memorialize the colleague.

While organizing the central core category **administration**, the old adage came to

mind, "Can't live with them and can't live without them." The loss of an administrator

threw an institution into a leadership crisis that lasted for years. At the same time, the

only negative statements made by the participants had to do with the perception of the

response from administration. Additionally, there was an expressed desire for

administration to take an active role when a loss occurs, right down to the division level

where the loss was experienced and possibly to formulate policy and cooperative

agreements to prepare for such events.

Participant 52

If anything cemented administration as the central category it was the exchange

with Participant 52. Participant 52 was one of the individuals who received an invitation

to participate in the study based on length of time at his home institution. Instead of

responding to the survey, he responded to the researcher through a series of emails. He

never completed the survey but candidly discussed his experience with being notified of a

loss while at work. Without answering the questions, his email exchanges fell in line with

those who did complete the survey, especially in relation to **notification** and

administration.

The researcher initially did not intend to include the emails in the study, because the discussion took place outside of the study and did not concern a workplace loss. However, as the themes and patterns began to emerge from the data, the researcher found herself returning to the exchange of emails because so much of what was said was echoed in Participant 52's exchanges.

Participant 52 was contacted and asked if he would allow his responses to be included in the study, which he agreed to. There was a concern on the part of the researcher for Participant 52's confidentiality, because his responses were not in relation to the death of a coworker but rather being notified while teaching class of the unexpected death of his 21-year-old son. There was a concern that his story might make him identifiable. He was contacted again, with the other participants, to validate the themes that had emerged from the data, and he added more clarifying comments than any other participant. He again affirmed his responses could be included in the dissertation.

Participant 52 had a <u>bad experience</u> with **notification**, as four of the survey participants reported. He was pulled out of his classroom by campus police and told of his son's death. "I then had to go back into the lab and dismiss the class. My legs were like jelly, and I could hardly walk!" He agreed with the seven participants who indicated that the *preferred method* of notification should be <u>face to face</u> and the seven participants who indicated that notification should come from the <u>department head</u>. Participant 52 offered an alternative suggestion, not seen in the other participants' responses, "Notification should come in person from the department head and should the department head not be available, a friendly, sympathetic colleague might substitute."

Participant 52 was the only participant who tried to follow up with administration about the upsetting manner of notification.

At the time, I expressed my feelings to [redacted], who did not even have the professionalism or sensitivity to admit there might have been a better way to handle such a situation. When I complained to [redacted], I offered a suggestion for an alternative way of handling this situation, namely, that the campus police should have notified an appropriate administrator, e.g., a department head, and that the department head should simply stick his head in the lab and as discretely as possible ask the party receiving the horrible news to step out for a moment. Should the department head not be available, a friendly colleague could substitute. [Redacted] did not even acknowledge this might have been a better alternative.

Unbeknownst to the researcher, during the multiple exchanges of emails, Participant 52 had been cc-ing a member of upper administration in an attempt to express his concern with how the situation had been handled 5 years earlier. Once the researcher realized the administrator had been included in the email chain, she emailed him with a copy of the introductory email sent to all participants and an explanation as to what had prompted the exchange with Participant 52. The administrator did not reply to any of the emails he received from Participant 52 or the researcher.

Participant 52's assessment and criticism of administration was quite sharp and condemning, "Administration wishes to stay as detached as it possibly can, to avoid any discomfort or inconvenience that might come its way." He went on to add, "They are a very clubbish group, and, if anything, they do look out for one another."

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Participant 52's contribution could have ended there, had it not been for the follow up to validate the identified themes from all the participants. He read through the quotes that were going to be used related to his participation and clarified several. He then stated:

> I realize that I am still trying to work through this so many years later: It will be six years this August. Perhaps I am venting, and if it comes across as such, please forgive me, but I am at a total loss to understand how such poorly equipped individuals make it into administration, and move up. In my case, it was the impersonal, insensitive way it was handled that still leaves me cold, even more so, since the administration, in the face of valid criticism, never acknowledged there was a problem.

Participant 52's lingering feelings echoes the findings in the literature from Berkeley:

> Employees may not remember all of the baby showers, birthdays or other life events of coworkers, but they can relay as if it were yesterday what the employer did or did not do when someone died. The response to death does not seem to leave the institutional memory. (Hoffman & Goya 2006, p. 170)

Even with that being said, one of the other themes in the **administration** central category is the desire from the participants for administrators to get it right. The participants gave a road map of what administration should not do. They also took their time to express what they would like to see as far as how notification is handled, what role they would like to see administration play, and what preparation they would like to occur before there is a death. The follow up communication with Participant 52 took a softer more reflective tone, and he shared how upper administration may have gotten it wrong, but his dean got

it right. "[Redacted] came by my office to tell me how sorry she was about [redacted] death. I'll never forget that. Dean [redacted] is a real mensch, in many ways a model to be emulated."

General Discussion

All institutions have an administrative hierarchy. The administration at a state college will be smaller than the one at a regional university due to differences in size and mission. However, when the institutions are in the same university system they have similar operating procedures. When there is no university system policy and no institutional policy, it stands to reason that faculty, staff, and lower level administrators would look to upper administration for leadership and guidance. This tendency is reinforced despite the difference in size, region, and mission of each institution in that the participants from Darton and Valdosta State had the same responses regarding their expectations of their administration. If the responses had not had any identifying information removed, it would have been impossible to know which responses came from which institution.

With the exception of Participant 4, who struggled with covering a colleague's class, if an experience were related as a bad experience, it had to do with the way the loss way handled by the administration. When the administration did not notify the department or the campus of a loss in a timely or compassionate manner, it was noticed. When upper administration did not acknowledge the loss at all, especially in the department experiencing the loss, it was noticed. When administration got it wrong the emotions were palpable.

P2—Shock at the how impersonal and unemotional.

P8—Administration did not acknowledge the death and did not express concern for those in the department, which was shocking.

P19—The institution could have shown more compassion in all cases.

P42—The director spoke to no one, though he had the opportunity, hard feelings still exist as a result.

P6—I would have liked to have seen some acknowledgement from the [redacted] President regarding [redacted] passing.

The areas where administration was barely mentioned had to do with the focus on the students and honoring a fallen colleague by assuming a class. The faculty who experienced a loss were able to find meaning in covering a class and ensuring the students' needs were met. They found a way to constructively contribute during a time of loss. However, the same individuals who found meaning in covering classes also found words for administration. Participant 1 stated in regard to covering a class, "I felt like I was doing it for my colleague and I liked that part." She then followed up with, "From my perspective, upper administration did not do anything. . . . I think the administration should take some direct role, if not with the whole campus, at least with the division." This is representative of statements made by others.

Implications

The death of an employee in an academic workplace may not be commonly discussed when engaging in strategic planning for the year or making institution goals, but the participants indicate it probably should be. There may not have been consensus in how things should change, but there was agreement in that they should change, especially

related to how notification is handled, and the role that upper administration should take when there is a loss. Two participants, who had harsh criticism for administration, took the opportunity to make additional comments.

P42: I am glad you are asking these questions.

P52: I think your work is very important, as it might actually lead to positive changes.

These comments indicate a more than a passing interest in this line of research, possibly leading to a change in the way deaths are handled in the academic workplace, and not just employee deaths.

P58: I just lost my Dad a week ago Sunday and it has been very interesting how people have responded or not responded.

Even though the study only focused on employee deaths, participants shared their concerns about responses or lack of responses to their own personal losses. Through these initial results useful information has emerged that can be used to look at formulating some policy, and further research to make sure that in the future when there is a loss upper administration gets it right in the way they respond, and echoing what participant 42 stated, "I think this study is useful and important."

Conclusion

This chapter revealed how participants described their experiences with the death of a colleague in an academic workplace. The findings from this research point to a need for academic institutions to evaluate how they respond to the death of one of their employees. The data suggest that they need to make preparations ahead of a loss. Upper administration was the focus of the majority of the responses. They may want to consider

providing grief training, setting up cooperative agreements with other institutions in the event of a death, and preauthorizing middle management to act when there is a death of a subordinate. Attention also needs to be given towards how employees are notified of a death, with special attention placed on manner

In summary, the death of an employee in an academic workplace is an upsetting experience, and sometimes even traumatic, especially in cases of violent death such as suicide. The findings of this research indicate that regardless of the size of institution or type of loss, there is resilience among surviving colleagues and a unifying goal to keep the institution functioning. There is a willingness to set aside personal grief for the needs of the institution. It is most meaningful when the surviving employees feel as though their contributions assist students and honors a fallen colleague.

Though this was a study of discovery that generated further questions needing to be explored, there was enough consistency among the responses which could be used to begin formulating organizational policy related to employee death in the academic workplace, with recommendations that track with the practices and checklists of other organizations. Institutions can prepare for a loss and make some decisions ahead of time related to forging cooperative agreements with other institutions, providing grief training (OPM, 1996), designating the manner of notification (OPM, 1996; University Health Services, 2017; University of South Australia, 2017) determining when to make counseling available (OPM, 1996; Topper 2008), deciding whether or not to permit employees to attend funerals without using leave time (Topper, 2008; University Health Services, 2017), crafting a policy related to memorials (Topper, 2008; University Health Services, 2017), and defining the role of upper administration related to providing

support, both structurally and intrapersonal to the institution and those directly affected by the death (OPM, 1996; University Health Services, 2017; University of South Australia, 2017). The results give a starting point for institutions that want to prepare before there is another coworker death. The consistency of the responses with established literature indicates that the data revealed "similar or comparable findings" pointing to the truth value of the results (Noble & Smith, 2015, p. 3).

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations could be identified in relation to this study. Recruiting was not straight-forward and did not go as planned, with the initial recruits suggesting other possible participants. The snowball technique only produced two recruits. After the initial pool, the additional participants were recruited by email, based on their length of service at the institution, which reduced the possibility of recruiting individuals who had worked in academia a short period of time and explains why the average length of service came out to be 17 years.

Exactly half of the participants shared stories related to deaths that had occurred over 2 years prior to the study, which means they relied on memories that may have faded with time when they responded to the survey. The other half of the participants discussed deaths that had occurred more recently, with seven of those deaths having occurred less than 9 months prior to the study. It would have been interesting to have compared the responses of the most recent deaths to the deaths that were more remote, but there was a problem with that type of comparison in this study. Eight of the 10 deaths that were more recent occurred at the same institution and concerned the death of faculty. The deaths that occurred over 2 years prior to the study had to do with the loss of a police officer or a member of upper administration, and eight of those responses came from one institution.

The participants were self-selected. The consistency across the participants' responses may have been a reflection of the type of person who would respond to a study like this one. Several recruiting emails were sent to a college that had experienced two losses in recent years, and not one person participated from that college. That was the only college where an invited participant called the researcher and said, "I'm sorry. I just can't." It is possible that the ones who chose not to participate might have shared significantly different responses.

The two institutions where the research was conducted are in the same state, in the same part of the state, and part of the same university system, which might also account for the consistency across participant responses. Though the fact that the findings tracked with UC Berkeley (University Health Services, 2017) and the University of South Australia (2017) indicated that the identified limitation is not a limitation.

Another limitation of this study has to do with the fact that it was conducted exclusively through written text. Although the data collection method had the benefit of offering a certain amount of anonymity and freedom to share things that participants may not have been comfortable saying out loud, it had the limitations in the fact the participants were isolated and did not have the back and forth of a focus group or individual interview. The interaction between focus group participants might have stimulated conversation or further discussion not seen in the survey responses. However, focus groups are not without their limitations. The chance exists that a focus group might turn into a support group, which can directly impact the information shared by participants. There was no back and forth with the researcher, except with Participant 52

with the unplanned email exchanges. Those emails provided some rich feedback and depth not seen in many of the survey responses.

Researcher bias was a concern and remains a concern because the researcher was the only coder. With only one researcher and coder, a genuine concern arises related to transcription and coding errors. Having the responses typed by the participants reduced the likelihood of transcription error and allowed the researcher to verify the results with the participants. Having two additional participants review all the results assisted in determining internal validity. Future research might utilize a different methodology, such as focus groups or interviews, but for the initial study the design was appropriate.

With qualitative research comes limitations related to being able to generalize the results. Because that is the nature of qualitative research, it is not a true limitation. With a smaller sample size, the researcher is able to secure a richer narrative of a phenomena, in this case the death of a coworker in an academic environment (Davis, 2012). What the data revealed were broad areas of common themes, specific areas for future research focus, and a few areas where institutions may want to explore formulating some preliminary policy related to how losses could be handled in the future.

<center>Overview</center>

The study explored the stories of individuals who had experienced the unexpected death of a colleague in the academic workplace. Although there are suggested guidelines for several professions, such as the OPM (1996), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2015), and Liberty Mutual Insurance (2012), academia only has two examples, specific to the institutions that adopted them. An ongoing search of the literature throughout the research process only revealed guidelines related to loss in an academic environment for

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the University of California-Berkeley (University Health Services, 2017) and the University of South Australia (2017).

Unlike many other professions, a university must continue functioning with no down time when there is an unexpected death because of the needs of the students. To complicate matters, many of the positions in academia require highly specialized qualifications and professionals who must meet certain accreditation requirements to even be permitted to assume the job once held by the deceased. Therefore, institutions have no choice but to turn to their current employees to assume the duties of the deceased right away. Something not acknowledged during times like these is that the coworkers left behind are forced to carry on and take on additional duties while experiencing their own personal grief related to the deceased.

The study was designed to be one of discovery and used grounded theory. Grounded theory was determined to be the most appropriate due to the inadequate amount of research that already existed related to death an in academic workplace. In grounded theory, the researcher hopes to "generate a general explanation (a theory) of actions, interactions, or processes through interrelating categories of information based on data collected from individuals" (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 249).

The research was conducted at two institutions within the University System of Georgia, Darton State College, and Valdosta State University. Twenty participants, 10 from each institution, were recruited through email to complete a written survey consisting of open ended questions related to their experiences of coworker death in an academic workplace. An additional individual chose to participate through an email discussion with the researcher.

The researcher had planned to compare the two institutions related to responses, but that proved not to be possible. The 10 participants at Darton State College shared stories related to the deaths of faculty members and a police officer. The participants at Valdosta State University primarily shared stories related the death of a provost but no faculty. The differences in the types of losses proved to make an interesting comparison anyway.

The participants overlapped in several areas in their responses. Even with the differences in the types of loss experienced at the two institutions, the central category of administration still emerged from the data. Participants at both institutions shared similar grief responses, preferences related to notification, and a desire for upper administration to take an active role when there is a death. They also shared similar stories of how deaths had been handled poorly in the past. The differences between Darton and Valdosta had to do with the types of losses experienced at each institution. Darton experienced the loss of faculty, so participants related stories of feeling honored to cover classes and making the transition easy for students. At Valdosta State the participants shared how the institution struggled for years following the death of a popular provost.

Once the surveys were collected, they were downloaded, read through twice, imported into Nvivo11, where the memo making process and coding took place. Several techniques were employed to contain researcher bias. The researcher used a reflexive journal throughout the study. The participants responded to the survey questions in written form, to reduce the likelihood of transcription errors. Once the data were compiled and conclusions drawn, the participants were asked to verify that the conclusions accurately reflected what they had intended. The entire dissertation was

reviewed by a participant from each institution to verify that the results were accurate. Participants 1 and 16 reviewed the dissertation more than once and found that there was no distortion in the results and the results were an accurate portrayal of the responses. The verifications by the participants and the two reviewers gave credence to the results reflecting internal validity.

The findings of the study tracked with the guidelines already developed by the University of South Australia (2017) and UC Berkeley (University Health Services, 2017), which indicates external validity, and data confirmation. From the data emerged implications for significant guidelines, and areas for future research. Notification of the loss and the role of administration generated the most consistent responses related to possible guidelines. The responses also pointed to possible useful applications for education and for policy formulation. Institutions can prepare for an employee death in the future.

Notification

The first area institutions might consider implementing some type of policy would be in the area of notification. Notification was mentioned by 15 of the 20 participants in the initial survey, even though it was not a survey question. The manner of notification used to inform Participant 52 of the death of his son was the reason he engaged the researcher in a lengthy email discussion. The literature reflects the importance of notification, and several organizations have guidelines related to how to handle notification, including the University of Australia (2017), UC Berkeley (University Health Services, 2017), OPM (1996), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2015), and Liberty Mutual Insurance (2012).

The participants gave specific indications of what they wanted related to notification. They want to be notified in a timely manner, before the death appears in social media; they would prefer to be notified by a phone call or to be told face to face. Participants also want the division experiencing the loss to be told first, and they did not want to receive notification by email. However, if notification did come in the form of an email, it needed to come from the president of the institution.

Several participants shared how the email they received was the wrong way to send notification. Participant 2 indicated the email she received was "a general, generic email." She then went on to say, "Notification should come from administration, preferably the President, it should include students and it should be personal, not generic." Participant 42 added that, "An email notification should contain "sad news" in the subject line, including notifications that go campus wide."

The primary problem with formulating guidelines related to email notification is that it was identified as the least popular method of notification by the participants but it is the most practical for preventing people from finding out about the loss through gossip and social media. This contradiction gives an indication for a future line of inquiry for a possible follow up study. "If you had to be notified by email regarding the death of a coworker, what would need to be included in the email?"

Gilat and Reshef (2015) conducted a study on psychological first aid through email. Participants received psychological first aid through email from trained volunteers and "exhibit[ed] a high level of satisfaction with the volunteer's response and perceive[d] it to be helpful in various aspects of their well-being" (p. 101), which indicates if handled correctly, email does not have to be a negative experience.

Psychological first aid is different from death notification, but they share being one-time occurrences. Perhaps there is something to be learned from them or explored further that can be applied to death notifications. Several agencies offer template suggestions for email notification including The University of South Australia (2017) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2015), but according to the participants there would need to be caution when using email because according to Participants 2 and 42 generic emails are bad. An email constructed based on a template may come across as just that, formulaic and lacking sincerity. Participant 12 warned, the "Administration can come across as disingenuous when attempting to provide comfort to the community and they didn't have a relationship with the deceased."

What institutions can apply from this is the possibility of setting up preauthorization at the department or division level when there is a loss, so that there is no delay in notification of immediate colleagues. During the writing of this dissertation one of the institutions experienced the loss of a faculty member. The family of the descendant called the division to report the death. The news spread rapidly but no official notice was sent out for days, and when it was sent it came from Human Resources, and was just a copy of the obituary. There was no acknowledgement from upper administration of the loss.

Had the dean been authorized, he could have sent out notification to the division in a timely manner or authorized the chair of the department to contact the close colleagues of the decedent. However, Human Resources waited for the official obituary to come out; had there been a protocol in place ahead of time, the division could have verified the death in another, preapproved, manner. The delay in notification came across

as a lack of concern. The failure to acknowledge the death by the president and provost was viewed as indifference, which was reflected in the results of the study.

Work

From the **work** category, institutions can apply that employees adapt to a loss, they still functioned in the workplace but expressed a need for guidance and support during a loss. Having a plan and consistent procedures in place make the transition following a loss easier related to the reassignment of work. As Participant 11 observed, "[I]n the case of classroom instructors, administrators need to be able to access a gradebook, syllabus, and other course materials." Some of what was listed could be collected at the beginning of every semester by the division office so that it is easily accessible by the chair or the dean. In the case of a gradebook, the division can develop a policy related to how to a chair or dean may gain access to a gradebook in time of emergency. This type of policy existing at the division level is reflective of the practices at the University of Australia (2017) and UC Berkeley (University Health Services, 2017). Decision-making at the middle management level is also reflected in the guidelines suggested by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2015) and OPM (1996).

Although placing much of the decision-making process at the division level makes practical sense, it leaves directors, chairs, and deans vulnerable for not having their own grief acknowledged and not receiving the support they need during a time of loss. This is reflected in the literature where managers can feel unprepared (Lynn, 2008), overwhelmed and lacking in support, (Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009) as well as experiencing disenfranchised grief (Kinder & Cooper, 2009). Participant 3, a dean who

had a faculty member die over spring break, and was tasked with getting his classes

covered before the students returned, echoed these concerns.

> P3: From my personal perspective, there was no time for me to grieve. The
>
> sudden death of the faculty member created a void that had to be filled to meet the
>
> needs of students. That immediate need forced me to shut off emotions and do
>
> what had to be done.

The University of South Australia (2017) and UC Berkeley (University Health Services,

2017) have guidelines and checklists, and a chain of command designated ahead of time

so that directors, chairs, and deans are prepared for when there is an unexpected death.

They do not operate without the support of upper administration and Human Resources,

and they have the guides and checklists to assist them when there is a loss. The OPM

(1996) instructed their managers to ask for help from Employee Assistance and upper

management:

> Ask for support from higher management. Relief from deadlines, and practical
>
> help such as a temporary employee to lighten your burden of administrative work
>
> can make it easier for you to focus on helping your employees and your
>
> organization return to normal functioning. (p. 2)

> Conversations need to take place between middle management, upper

administration, human resources, and employee assistance to create mechanisms to give

middle management the freedom to make the decisions needed to keep the division

running, but also feel that they have the needed support and resources. Participant 58 also

suggested that, "Perhaps cooperatives could be established with other institutions

regarding supplying professors to cover the classes of a deceased professor at a

neighboring institution." A cooperative agreement could facilitate two or more institutions formulating policy related to the unexpected death of a faculty member before there is a loss.

One of the elements that needs to be considered ahead of time is ensuring there are provisions for counseling, especially for the department experiencing the loss. The need for counseling to be available was mentioned by seven of the participants, and is reflected in the literature (McGuinness, 2007; Topper, 2008; Turner, 2012; Yost, 2013).

Institutions need to be aware that a traumatic death, such as a homicide, suicide, on the job death, or violent death may require some form of postvention or psychological first aid and a longer commitment to providing counseling to those affected (Andriessen et al., 2017). Although only three participants had experienced the death of a coworker due to suicide, their responses were so different from the other participants that they were included even though that category did not receive data saturation.

More research needs to be done related to employee suicide in an academic workplace. Research already exists related to responding to college students who experience a death by suicide and how to provide postvension and ongoing support (Carson J. Spence Foundation, 2013; HEMHA, 2014). Research needs to be expanded to employees of colleges or universities who have experienced the traumatic death of a coworker. Participant 58, stated, "I think some education for the campus would be nice. Letting folks know the importance of acknowledging that a death has occurred and that grieving is a natural part of the process." Her suggestion could be expanded to include issues unique to suicide. Any type of training on grief or suicide would need to be provided by highly qualified professionals.

There are other decisions that can be explored ahead of time having to do with funerals and memorials. Four participants indicated that employees should be allowed to attend funerals, without having to utilize leave time, and that memorials need to be allowed. On the surface, decisions related to funeral attendance and memorials might seem rather simple but they are not. There need to discussions related to inclusion at the institutions looking to formulate guidelines. Funerals and memorials can be important to the survivors, but they can also be alienating for individuals who do not belong to the predominant culture, they must take the wishes of the bereaved family into consideration, and there may be complications related to the possibility of litigation related to deaths that took place at the workplace (Beder, 2004; Charles-Edward, 2005; Grensing-Pophal, 2000; Hoffman & Goyer, 2009; Jeffreys, 2005; Liberty Mutual, 2012; Perreault, 2011; Turner, 2012; Vivona & Ty, 2011).

Decisions need to be made not only about the use of leave time for funerals and memorials, but also about canceling classes and closing offices in order to attend the services. These complex issues are why it is important to have the discussions before there is a loss. As two participants pointed out, it is crucial that all employees are treated the same. Participant 8 summed it up by saying, "Do the same for a member of the custodial staff as you would for a vice-president."

Even though Participant 8 indicated that vice presidents and custodians need to be treated equally, developing a policy preparing for the loss of an administrator may not be as straight forward as preparing for the loss of a faculty member. The reassignment of work for a deceased faculty member is time limited to the remainder of the semester; it is not as finite as with the loss of an administrator. Participant 11 observed:

With administrators, the immediate needs may not be so clear-cut; however, in a busy office, not everyone may know the status of different projects, actions, etc. However, again, office staff needs access to emails, documents, appointments, etc. Even with those materials, people may not be able to reconstruct the planned actions.

The literature lacks guidance for planning prior to the loss of someone in upper administration. Although the OPM (1996) directed middle managers to seek help from higher ups in their time of need, there is no guidance for upper management if they suffer a loss. Participant 11 did a comprehensive job conceptualizing the complex nature of assuming the duties of someone in upper administration. The loss of an administrator is an area where there needs to be more research in order to determine the best practices and types of policies that would help an institution prepare for such an eventuality.

The responses from the participants who experienced the loss of an administrator, reflect the need for the further research specific to the death of an administrator in an academic workplace. Participant 14 succinctly summed it up by saying, "The division this person lead has been in a leadership spiral since his death. It still hasn't recovered 5 years later."

Administration

Administration was identified as the central category in this study. It was the one topic that received the most commentary, and the one that is the most challenging to develop guidelines for. Depending on the administrator, the guidelines for addressing such a loss might need to come from the system office, as opposed to the institutional level.

At the same time, all eyes look toward administration for a response when there is a death. The consistent message from the participants was that administration time and again did not respond correctly when there was a death. McKenzie (2014) stated,

Managers and colleagues can be inept and avoidant . . . [T]he effect of a manger that mishandles a vulnerable employee can do harm, reducing job satisfaction, and increasing the potential that the employee will leave the organization (pp. 89–90).

A manager ill-equipped to handle the death of an employee can lead to harsh criticism and a negative memory lasts many years.

However, as Topper (2008) pointed out, "It is crucial to note how hard it is for the organization to do everything right when it comes to such an emotional event" (p. 584). Even with that wise observation, that does not change the institutional memory of what administration has done wrong during times of loss, with some participants reporting bitter memories stretching back 6 years prior to the study. Participants complained about an apparent lack of concern, poorly worded emails, counseling not being offered, middle managers not receiving support, and an inconsistent manner in which deaths were treated. Over half of the participants used words like "shock" and "dismay" when discussing the death of a coworker. However, the administration missed the emotional impact the deaths had on the institution and focused on continuing to operate despite the loss. Individuals reported how departments supported each other but did not report receiving that support from upper administration. What needs to happen is to explore further what needs to happen for administration to get their response right, so that the employees feel supported and the institution continues to function. An administration could learn much from

receiving education related to the dual process model for understanding how the grief process related to employees as well as their own grief processes.

One of the most compelling findings from this study was that even though both institutions have a human resources department, none of the participants ever mentioned human resources related to the death of a coworker. The participants only mentioned "administration," even though that word never appeared on the initial survey. Employees look to the administration in a time of crisis, not human resources. The question then becomes, what does human resources need to know before there is the loss of an employee? Perhaps they would better serve the institution by taking a supporting role, instead of a lead role.

Much still needs to be determined related to best practices, but based on the responses of the participants administrations can prepare for a loss. Administrations need to accept the role of being actively involved when there is a loss and to understand the employees will look to them for support and gestures of caring. At the same time, upper administration needs to be cautious so as not to come across as being disingenuous in their response to an employee death (Hallin & Gustavsson, 2009). It is a tenuous balancing act.

Employees want to receive notification from administration and more specifically the president, not human resources. Upper administration needs to show they care, especially in the division experiencing the loss. The administration needs to open the lines of communication to determine what the division needs during a time of loss. The divisions need to be able to communicate what type of structural and intrapersonal support would most benefit the surviving employees.

Policies need to be developed related to providing counseling when there is a death and for longer periods following a traumatic death. Special attention needs to be paid to those who may experience disenfranchised grief. In order to accomplish this attention, education needs to be offered related to grief, traumatic death, signs of disenfranchised grief, and the best practices for interventions. More research needs to be conducted to identify best practices, especially related to the perceived role of upper administration. As Participant 52 pointed out, some administrators "avoid doing these unpleasant tasks and [this] leads to arrogance, or certainly to behavior that is easily perceived as arrogance." However, when he verified his contribution to the study he added that his dean had been the antithesis of the other administrator and gave hope that administration could be positive element during a time of loss: "[Dean's name] came by my office to tell me how sorry she was about [redacted] death. I'll never forget that. Dean [redacted] is a real mensch, in many ways a model to be emulated."

Generalized Application

The study was designed to be exploratory and not to generalize but to generate descriptive data, which was accomplished. This was a preliminary study because, as the responses indicate, many more elements need to explore related to notification, the loss of an administrator, how to handle funerals and memorials, how to address a traumatic death, and the role of upper administration during a time of loss. There are further complications in that no two losses are the same, which makes writing policy a challenge. Participant 3 reported that one loss took place over spring break, while many of the faculty were away, which impacted her choice of email for the majority of her notifications. At the same time, the loss over spring break gave her the opportunity to

plan for how to respond to the needs of the students and cover the descendant's classes. This would have also been the case had there been a loss during the summer months. Had the loss occurred during the beginning of the semester or during final's week, the responses would have been different.

Even though every possible scenario cannot be planned for, institutions can still begin the process of developing guidelines related to the unexpected death of an employee in the academic workplace. The fact that the results of this study track with other studies indicates that there is external validity to the results and can be used to facilitate the development of guidelines, and future research.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of individuals who had experienced the death of a colleague or employee in an academic workplace. From their responses, it was hoped that possible guidelines could be identified for preparing for future unexpected deaths in the academic workplace. Grounded theory was used because there was so little literature related to responding to an employee death in academic workplace.

What emerged from the data were themes institutions could consider when formulating policy related to the death of an employee in an academic environment concerning: method of notification of the death, reassignment of work, the need for campuswide training related to grief, signs of disenfranchised grief, and traumatic loss, the need for counseling, the specific needs of those who experience traumatic loss, possible formulation of cooperative agreements with other institutions, the role administration should play in notification and in the division experiencing the loss, policy

related to attendance of funerals and memorials as well as the use of leave time for these services, while taking into consideration the wishes of the family and the different cultural needs of the campus community.

The study also raised several questions that will require further research. The method of notification was of great concern, but although email was the most practical, it was also the least desirable. Further research might indicate what an email would need to contain to be considered acceptable by employees. The perception of upper administrations' response is very important to the campus community. The participants expressed a desire for upper administration to take an active role when there is a loss. However, there was a concern of upper administration coming across as disingenuous in expressing care and concern over someone they did not know. The research pointed to the need for training so that the administration would know how to support middle management, how best to assist the division experiencing a loss, what employees want to hear when there is a loss, signs of grief, and issues specific to traumatic loss requiring professional intervention. Perhaps the most complicated question that arose from this research concerns anticipating the loss of an employee. Although devising policy for the possible loss of faculty presented as fairly straightforward, such was not the case with upper administration. Such policies may need to be generated with guidance from the university system office. The study did not reach data saturation in relation to the loss of a member of the staff. There are so many different jobs that fall under the designation of "staff" on a college campus that a follow up study would need to recruit a larger sample size, across various departments in order to be representative of the experiences and needs of staff members following the loss of a coworker.

What needs to be recognized is that the death of an employee in an academic workplace presents unique challenges, some of which can be planned for before there is a loss. Not formulating simple policy related to timely, appropriate notification, access to needed information, and acknowledgement of the loss by administration is a formula for confusion and frustration as well as anger and bitterness towards the institution. Even if institutions do not want to approach the more complicated issues, such as how to handle the loss of an administrator, any preliminary work that is accomplished ahead of time, is one less thing that has to be "figured out" during the time of crisis following the death of an employee.

The Researcher's Story

Prior to my career in academia, I was employed as a full-time counselor. My area of expertise is addiction counseling. The reason I mention that is with addiction counseling it is not uncommon to experience the death of a client due to overdose, suicide, or accident. Before I was 30, I had had over 30 clients or former clients die. I decided I needed to step away from the field of addictions before I burned out, so I took a job as the counseling director at Darton State College.

When I started at Darton, it had approximately 2,400 students, which meant everyone knew everyone. I had a considerable amount of training and experience in loss and bereavement due to my previous jobs, and so the institution frequently turned to me for guidance during times of loss ranging from 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina to the deaths of students and the loss of coworkers. The deaths of two colleagues from the same department, 10 days apart was the inspiration for this research, or so I thought at the time.

When I began this study, my methodologist recommended I begin a reflexive journal. Throughout, I have recorded my thoughts, what I identified as my biases and feelings from the very beginning. Initially, I documented all the coworker deaths I had experienced at Darton during my time there. As I conducted my research, I realized I had left out two from my original notations. While I was compiling my results another faculty member died unexpectedly. That brought the total to 10 colleagues who had died during my 17 years of employment at Darton.

From my earliest writings, it appeared that the reason I started this study was due to two deaths that had occurred approximately 10 days apart in the same division but had been treated differently. I noticed the differences, but the people in the division that experienced the loss really noticed the differences. I wondered why upper administration had handled the deaths so differently. I wondered even more about that as time passed and my colleagues still talked about it. Time did not temper their disgust.

The two employees, who were faculty, worked in the same department for the same amount of time. The first one was killed in a car wreck during finals week in spring semester. Upper administration chartered a bus to the funeral, 50 miles away. All of the members of upper administration attended the funeral, as well as many faculty, staff, and students. There was an insert in the graduation program dedicated to the memory of the deceased faculty member. All the faculty wore maroon ribbons at graduation, and his academic robes were placed where he would have been seated at graduation. We held a moment of silence for him.

Ten days later his colleague died of a heart attack. It was between spring and summer semester, and nothing that had been done for the first employee was done for the

second. The funeral was only 3 miles from Darton, but only one member of upper administration attended, even though all of them were in town. One administrator attended a baseball game that ended before the funeral but did not attend the funeral. This was particularly hurtful because a member of the deceased's immediate family also worked for Darton, and directly with upper administration. All of the people from the deceased's division attended his funeral, some came back from vacation early in order to be there. They noticed the absence of upper administration and several used the word "disgraceful" to describe their absence from the funeral.

As the months passed, the discussions frequently turned to how the two deaths had been treated differently. There was a lot of anger. I made an observation to one administrator that we should probably acknowledge the second death in the graduation program that Fall, the way we had acknowledge the first death in the Spring. I was told "no" because it would confuse people, since he had been dead 7 months. I tried to communicate the anger and hurt I still heard from that department but it was never acknowledged.

Because I had been trained in loss and bereavement, I started wondering about best practices related to the death of someone in academia. The faculty member who died during finals week put the department in a bind. They had to figure out how to handle final exams, address the needs of bereaved students and colleagues, and replace the individual in time for the start of summer semester. I had a phone call from the dean of that division, who just wanted someone to talk to, and the dean said to me, "I am just making it up as I go along."

Although those losses seem to inspire my research, not one single person from that division participated in the survey, even though several were invited. One called me to apologize for not participating and said, "I just can't." She could not continue speaking after that one sentence. She paused, repeated it, and hung up. My research was conducted 2 years after those deaths, and it was still too raw for her.

I began doing research to identify the best practices that had already been identified related to the death of a coworker. I then lowered my expectations and looked for policies and procedures that existed related to the death of someone in academia. I found the study from Berkley and the one from South Australia. I talked to a member of the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia about any existing policies related to the institutions in Georgia. Her response was that I needed to let her know what my research showed to be best practices, because the USG had no policies, but needed them. She expressed hope that I would be able to develop trainings from what I found.

As I began formulating my research project, my chair started asking me, "What do you expect to find?" I never liked that question because in my mind I was doing a study of discovery; I needed to be open. I wanted to be open. I was concerned that if I identified what I thought I would find, I would find exactly that. I would answer him that I assumed people would indicate that they thought things could have been handled better and that they noticed differences in how losses were handled. I frequently quoted the Berkeley study about the institutional memory being long.

I wanted to include Valdosta State in the research to determine if the experiences at Darton were unique or if other institutions responded to deaths as best they could, with no preplanning the way Darton did. It never occurred to me that there would be no

faculty deaths shared by the Valdosta participants, which made direct comparisons not possible. I was really hoping to receive some responses from the counseling staff at Valdosta, to see if they shared any of my experiences from Darton. I was curious to know if they provided counseling services when there was a coworker death. Unfortunately, I did not have any counselors participate in the study, though they were invited.

My methodologist made an observation during one of our meetings. He suggested that I should try to recruit a sample that included different types of deaths such as natural causes, violent death, murder, and/or suicide. He thought there would be a difference in how people responded to a death by natural causes as opposed to say a homicide or suicide. I did not know of any homicides at Darton, but I did know of two suicides. I made sure to send invitations to a few of the people at Darton who had worked with the police officer who had killed himself. I had no idea that I would receive a response from Valdosta that also included suicide.

My chair's question replayed in my mind through the task of memo making, and coding, "Did you find what you thought you would find?"

I can finally answer that question. No, I did not find what I thought I would find because I was wrong about what I thought I had been looking for. This truly proved to be a grounded theory study right down to the researcher's story. I thought I was conducting this research for one reason but after reading and coding, and examining and memo making, I began to see something new in my reflexive journal. I had misled myself, and it was not until I was compiling the core categories that I came to that realization. I truly believed I was motivated to conduct my research by the deaths of the two faculty members from the same department that had been handled differently. It was not until I

found myself insisting to my chair that the trauma category needed to be included that I recognized an underlying motivation I had missed. When I saw the statements of regret related by the participants regarding the suicides I realized I was saying "Me too" with those participants.

I knew the police officer who had killed himself, and he had done so while I was at a 3-day conference. When I came home from the conference, I found out about his death from Facebook. I was sick. I called a coworker crying. It was one of the single worst experiences I had ever had, as a coworker and as a human being. I had the same thoughts as the participants wishing I had taken the opportunity to have spoken to him more and wondering if I had not been at the conference would anything have been different.

When the officer died, I spoke to my boss, who was upper administration, but he left how to handle the institution's response to me. I called the closest university for help with offering counseling to the police department, and they never called me back. I have not forgotten that all these years later; that memory is long. I called a second institution, and one of the counselors there came to help with speaking to the officers in the department. I could not handle the debriefings alone. I should not have been doing the debriefing at all. I was the one who implemented the calls to the other institutions, upper administration had nothing to do with those decisions. What Participant 52 stated about administration rang to me, the "administration wishes to stay as detached as it possibly can, to avoid any discomfort or inconvenience that might come its way."

We held a candle light vigil for the police officer because he was much beloved by the students, especially in housing, where he frequently patrolled. I organized the vigil

with the director of campus life and the events coordinator. It was well attended, and beautifully done. We had memory books for the officer's widow and children that the students had written stories about the police officer in. None of the things that happened came as a result of action taken by upper administration. Participant 8 was right, upper administration never expressed anything to the department that experienced the loss.

No one expressed anything to me. I was crushed. The support was not there, for any of the losses. When there was support, an acknowledgement of grief, or a memorial dedicated to the deceased, none occurred as a result of action taken by upper administration. Upper administration approved the vigil, and of all the memorials but nothing was initiated from their end.

I believe that is why I could identify with Participant 52, the one who I exchanged emails with. People really hope that upper administration will show its human side. When the vice president for Academic Affairs attended a funeral, the department was touched and really appreciated the personal note she sent commending the division in the show of support for the deceased and his family. That meant a lot. When the dean attended the funeral of a deceased faculty member he did not know that well, but said some heartfelt words, it was noticed by the colleagues and really appreciated. The absence of the vice presidents, provost, and president was also noticed.

Now I can finally answer my chair's question related to finding what I thought I would find. The answer is "sort of." I did not know notification would be an issue. Because people think of me as a counselor first, I have almost always received a phone call to find out if I would be willing to help in the instance of a death. In the case of the police officer, I had been gone, so no one had called. I can say without hesitation that

finding out from Facebook is incredibly upsetting, and not the way anyone should be notified. I would have preferred a text with the message "Call me" from anyone at the institution, over finding out from social media.

I was not sure what the responses would be related to reassignment of work because I only knew the issues related to the deaths at Darton. I thought a bigger institution like Valdosta might have more resources when there was an unexpected death. It never crossed my mind that losing a provost would be such a challenging loss, and difficult person to replace. In all my time at Darton, there has never been the unexpected death of a member of upper administration. There have been two cancer related deaths of members of the president's cabinet, but both occurred long after the diagnoses had been made and the individuals placed on medical leave. There were opportunities to train and transition personnel into the jobs the two individuals left behind.

The one area I thought people would comment on was the feeling of helplessness due to lack of preparation. The responses related to upper administration were not a total surprise. I did not know what would be said, but I thought others might have felt like they had made it up as they went along and would have liked some guidance from upper administration.

There are a few things that have stayed with me. I really would like to know what the experience was like for the division that lost two faculty so close together. Maybe their responses would have been the same as those I received, but I really wonder because no one participated. I also wonder about the department that lost the police officer to suicide. I sent two invites and both individuals participated. The reason I only sent two is the majority of the people who were in that department at the time of the officer's death

had left. It made me wonder if that was the nature of the work or did it fall in line with the literature, where employees change jobs following a death.

Now the study is over and the findings typed up, I find that I have more questions than answers, but my readings of grounded theory prepared me for that eventuality. I believe I can narrow the entire dissertation down to a paragraph and address it to administration.

Please respond to all deaths personally, and with compassion. Understand that not all deaths are the same. Take the time necessary to make sure the department experiencing the loss has the support it needs, including the middle managers. What you do may seem trivial but will make a difference and leave a lasting impression on the individuals left to carry on following a death. Your actions matter.

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APPENDIX A:

Participation Letter

Dear_____,

My name is Carol Ann Ham and I am a doctoral candidate in the department of

Public Administration at Valdosta State University. I am asking you to participate in a

study on identifying possible guidelines for addressing the unexpected death of a

coworker in an academic workplace. I am interested in the personal experiences of those

in academia since the academic environment is unique from other work settings

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Agreeing to take part in this

research means you will complete a written survey consisting of four open ended

questions, with the potential for a follow up question. Depending on the length of your

answers, the survey should take approximately 30 minutes. If you have experienced the

unexpected death of a coworker or employee in the academic workplace, you meet the

target population for this study. Additionally, you must be over 18 years old, and have

been employed full time in an academic setting at the time of loss. Below you will find a

copy of the questions and the informed consent. I wanted to give you an opportunity to

preview the questions before you agreed to participate in the study.

If you agree to take part in this study you will be assigned the number [ ] , which

is how you will be identified, when your survey is downloaded. This will help ensure

your confidentiality in the process. When you click on the link below, you will see the

informed consent form at the beginning of the survey. Once you have reviewed it, you

will be asked to type your name and the date, indicating your agreement to participate in

this study; you will also enter the number you were assigned in this email. If you know

anyone who might be an appropriate participant for this study, please enter their email

address in the spot provided on the survey so that he/she might be contacted for possible

inclusion in this research. Thank you for your consideration in being a part of this study.

Please feel free contact me if you have any questions.

     Carol Ann Ham, Doctoral Candidate

     Valdosta State University

     cham@valdosta.edu

     Phone 229-317-6895

     Link to the survey:

https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_3g9SH1MiNEAen7T

APPENDIX B:

Informed Consent Form

Lead researcher: Carol Ann Ham MA, MSW, LMSW, Doctoral Candidate,

Department of Public Administration, Valdosta State University, cham@valdosta.edu

Identifying Possible Guidelines for Addressing the Unexpected Death of a

Coworker in an Academic Workplace.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this survey is to conduct research in the area of the unexpected

death of a coworker or employee specific to the academic workplace. You are being

asked to participate in this study to assist the researcher in gaining an understanding of

people's individual experiences with an academic workplace death. Participation is

strictly voluntary. The object is to identify patterns in experiences that could help

formulate guidelines for preparing for and addressing future losses. The goal is to have

approximately 20 participants from Darton State College and Valdosta State University.

You were assigned a number in your introductory email, in order to protect your

confidentiality. You will enter that number and answer the demographic questions. What

will then follow is a series of open ended questions where you can share your experiences

with loss in the academic workplace. There is a final blank for follow up questions that I

might ask you based on what could arise from your answers or from other participants in

this study. The survey should take less than a half hour, depending on how detailed your

responses are. You will be contacted via email with any follow up questions.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You may drop out of the study at any time. You may request your survey and answers be discarded and answers not used in the study. The researcher will honor these requests. The information obtained from the survey will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely in password protected files and participants will only be known by their assigned number. The de-identified data may be used in further research, publications, generation of proposed guidelines, or educational purposes by the lead researcher and may possibly be viewed by members of her dissertation committee. Questions about loss can be upsetting or bring up difficult memories. If you would like to speak to a counselor there will be two available:

- Lisa Etheridge LCSW, Darton State College 229-317-6249

- Carrie Dorminey, LCSW, Valdosta State University 229-245-4337.

APPENDIX C:

Survey

Survey

Demographic questions for all participants

- Gender

- How long have you (or did you) work in an academic environment

- Length of time that has passed since the most recent unexpected academic
  workplace death

- You were assigned a number in your introductory email, please enter it here. If
  you do not know your number, just leave it blank. One will be assigned to you
  once the survey is complete.

- Your role at the institution

  o Faculty

  o Staff

  o Administration

For faculty and staff

The survey will consist of the following questions

1. Please discuss the coworker deaths have you experienced in the academic workplace.

2. How did the institution respond when there was an unexpected death of a co-worker?
And how did you react to their response?

3. How did the unexpected death effect decision-making and productivity in the
workplace?

4. Looking back, what do you wish had been done differently?

5. Anything you would like to add?

      For Administrators

1. Please discuss the employee deaths have you experienced in the academic workplace as an administrator.

2. How did you respond when there was an unexpected death of an employee? And how did your employees respond?

3. How did the unexpected death effect decision making and productivity in the workplace?

4. Looking back, what do you wish had been done differently?

5. Anything you would like to add

Follow Up Questions

5. What are your thoughts on the following statement: "I think asking professors who were very close to their deceased colleague and friend to jump in and take over their classes needs to be reconsidered. I think in the future the college should attempt to find adjuncts or professors from a nearby institution to take over the classes."

6. What are your thoughts on the best way to notify coworkers/employees about the death of a colleague/coworker?

7. How would you describe the role upper administration would ideally take when there is an unexpected death of an employee?

8. Anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX D:

Institutional Review Board Approval

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

PROTOCOL NUMBER:	IRB-03298-2015	**INVESTIGATOR:**	Carol Ann Ham

PROJECT TITLE: Identifying Possible Guidelines for Addressing the Unexpected Death of a Co-worker in an Academic Workplace

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board oversight under Exemption Category(ies) :1&2. You may begin your study immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Although not a requirement for exemption, the following suggestions are offered by the IRB Administrator to enhance the protection of participants and/or strengthen the research proposal:

Contingent upon the following being added to the consent form:

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled *"Title of Project,"* which is being conducted by *name of researcher*, a *faculty member/staff member/student* at Valdosta State University. This survey is anonymous. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. **Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older.**

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to *name of researcher* at *telephone number* or *e-mail address*. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5045 or irb@valdosta.edu.

☐ If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth W. Olphie   11/18/15   *Thank you for submitting an IRB application.*
Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator   Date   *Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.*

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Valdosta State University

APPLICATION FOR USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
PLEASE RETAIN FORMAT ON ALL SEVEN PAGES

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete this form by checking all appropriate boxes, answering questions completely, attaching required documents, and signing the Certification Statement. Submit application to the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research Administration.	**FOR IRB USE ONLY:** **IRB** - _____ - _____ Received: _____ Reviewed: _____ Exemption: ☐ Yes ☐ No Category(ies): _____ Reviewer Signature: _____ Expedited: ☐ Yes ☐ No Category(ies): _____

Project Title: Identifying Possible Guidelines for Addressing the Unexpected Death of a Co-worker in an Academic Workplace

Responsible Researcher: Carol Ann Ham

Faculty Advisor *(If Student):* Dr Michael Sanger

Project Dates: From 10 / 01 / 2015 To: 07 / 31 / 2016
  MM DD YYYY   MM DD YYYY

Mailing Address *(If Student):*

437 Houston Farm Rd

Poulan, GA 31781

Minimum # of Participants (including controls): 24

Maximum # of Participants (including controls): 40

External Funding: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Department: Public Administration

E-mail: cham@valdosta.edu

Telephone: 2229 894 3982

If YES, **Sponsor:** _____

(Note: If the research is or will be externally funded, include a copy of the portion of the proposal or award that describes the use of human participants with your application.)

VSU Status:
☐ General Faculty
☐ Adjunct Faculty
☐ Research Associate
☐ Administrator/Staff Member
☒ Graduate Student
☐ Undergraduate Student
☐ Other: _____

If you are a VSU student, please indicate the academic purpose of the proposed research:
☒ Doctoral Dissertation
☐ Master's Thesis
☐ Undergraduate/Honors Senior Project
☐ Other:_____

Note: If your research is subject to oversight by another institution's IRB (i.e., the research is intended to satisfy degree requirements at another institution), please consult with the IRB Administrator by calling 229-259-5045.

Co-Investigator Name(s)	**Institutional Affiliation***	**E-mail Address**	**IRB FWA Number**
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**If not affiliated with Valdosta State University. If any Co-Investigator is not affiliated with an institution that has a federally-assured IRB, he/she will be required to complete IRB training and execute an "Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement" with the VSU IRB.*

Applicability of IRB Oversight of Student-Conducted Projects:

Most student-conducted **class assignments** that involve observing, surveying, interviewing, or otherwise interacting with other individuals do not constitute "research" as defined by the VSU IRB and are not are not subject to IRB oversight. Specifically, the following types of student projects that do not require IRB oversight include those that:
- Are conducted solely within the confines of the classroom or within a departmental research participant pool if they:
  -- are a general requirement of a course,
  -- have the sole purpose of developing the student's research skills, and
  -- will be overseen by a faculty member; or
- Are conducted outside the classroom and outside departmental research participant pools, provided they do not involve minors, do not target vulnerable adult populations, do not pose a risk of physical harm to pregnant women and fetuses, do not deal with a topic of sensitive or personal nature unless data are collected anonymously, and do not involve any type of activity that places the participants at more than minimal risk. ("Minimal risk" is defined in Question 9 of this application form.)

Other student-conducted research activities that are not subject to IRB overview as independent research protocols include those that:
- Are part of a larger research project that has current Valdosta State University IRB approval, and the approved protocol includes student engagement in the specific activities; or
- Are part of a larger research project that has current approval of a federally assured IRB at another institution.

If you are a student conducting a class project that fits the above description and your instructor concurs, your project is not subject to IRB oversight and no application is required. 172

1. ☒ YES   ☐ NO   **Does your proposed study meet the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board definition of *research* as described below?**

All research involving human participants conducted by Valdosta State University faculty, staff, and students and staff is subject to IRB review. **The Valdosta State University IRB defines "research" as a *systematic* investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to *generalizable knowledge.***

Some student-conducted studies that may not meet the definition of "research" provided above but involve human participants are subject to IRB oversight if they:

- Are undertaken with the intent to produce results that will be submitted for peer-reviewed publication or presentation;
- Include minors (e.g., persons under the age of 18);
- Target potentially vulnerable individuals (e.g., those whose capacity to freely give consent may be compromised because of socio-economic, educational, or linguistic disadvantage; cognitive impairment; advanced age; or terminal illness)
- May place pregnant women and/or fetuses at risk of physical harm;
- Deal with a topic of a sensitive or personal nature in a way in which anonymity cannot be sustained and the examination or reporting of participant responses or behavior may be potentially stigmatizing or may place the participant at more than minimal risk physically, psychologically, socially, or economically or for civil or criminal liability;
- Involves any other type of activity that places the participants at more than minimal risk, considering both the probability and the magnitude of harm. (See Question 9 for a full definition of "minimal risk.")

2. ☒ YES   ☐ NO   **Are the human participants in your study *living* individuals or are you are collecting information about deceased persons that may put third parties (i.e., surviving spouses and/or living descendents) at more than minimal risk of harm?**   ("Minimal risk" is defined in Question 9 of this application form.)

*If you answered NO to Question 1 **or** 2, stop here; no review is required, submitting this form is not necessary. If you answered YES to **both** questions, continue.*

3. ☒ YES   ☐ NO   **Will you obtain data through *intervention* or *interaction* with living or third party individuals?**

"Intervention" includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (*e.g.,* measurement of heart rate or venipuncture) and manipulations of the participant or the participant's environment that are performed for research purposes. "Interaction" includes communication or interpersonal contact between the investigator and participant (*e.g.,* surveying or interviewing).

4. ☒ YES   ☐ NO   **Will you obtain *identifiable private information* about these individuals?**

'Private information' includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, or information provided for specific purposes which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (*e.g.,* a medical record or student record). 'Identifiable' means that the identity of the participant may be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information (*e.g.,* by name, code number, pattern of answers, etc.).

*If you answered NO to Questions 3 **and** 4, stop here. No review is required, and it is not necessary to submit this form. If you answered YES to **either** question, continue.*

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS: In accordance with federal regulations, the VSU IRB requires all responsible researchers, co-investigators, key personnel, including unaffiliated investigators, and faculty advising student researchers to complete an educational program.   Co-investigators from other institutions are not required to complete the VSU educational program if they have a current certificate of training from their own federally assured IRB. Key personnel are those individuals who will play a role in designing, conducting, and/or reporting on the research. Unaffiliated investigators are those individuals not affiliated with VSU or another institution or organization that has a federally assured IRB. Educational requirements must be met before the IRB will review your research protocol for either exemption or approval. The IRB strongly recommends that the required CITI educational program be completed ***before*** you finalize your research protocol, as it may provide information on research design and considerations that will enhance protections for your research participants.

VSU's educational program is available on-line at <http://www.citiprogram.org>. **All responsible researchers, VSU co-investigators, key personnel, unaffiliated investigators, and faculty advisors must successfully complete, at a minimum, the following CITI modules:**

1. Introduction
2. History and Ethical Principles–SBR
3. Defining Research with Human Subjects–SBR
4. The Regulations and the Social and Behavioral Sciences–SBR
5. Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process
6. Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences– SBR
7. Informed Consent–SBR
8. Privacy and Confidentiality–SBR
9. Valdosta State University Module

Additional modules may be required for specific types of research, as indicated in Question 5.

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5. **Characteristics of the Target Population** *(check all that apply and complete the CITI modules indicated)*:

(Note: Characteristics are not mutually exclusive. For example, if your are proposing research involving children in public schools, both the "Research with Children – SBR" and "Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools – SBR" modules are required.)

Study population targets ...	Additional CITI Modules Required
☐ a. Minors (individuals under 18 years of age); **Age(s):** __	Research with Children – SBR
☐ b. Public school (PK-12) children; **Grade Level(s):** __	Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools – SBR
☐ c. Pregnant women or fetuses	Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Pregnant Women and Fetuses in Utero
☐ d. Prisoners (adults or juveniles involuntarily confined or detained in a penal institution, detained in other facilities which provide alternatives to criminal prosecution or prison, or individuals detained pending arraignment, trial, or sentencing)	Research with Prisoners – SBR
☐ e. Potentially vulnerable individuals (e.g., those whose capacity to freely give consent may be compromised because of socio-economic, educational, or linguistic disadvantage; cognitive impairment; advanced age; or terminal illness)	Research with Protected Populations – Vulnerable Subjects: An Overview
☐ f. Individuals in foreign countries	International Research – SBR
☐ g. Individuals from different cultures or individuals from a particular racial/ethnic group	Group Harms: Research with Culturally or Medically Vulnerable Groups
☐ h. Individuals about whom data will be collected from records (e.g., educational, health, or employment records)	Records-Based Research
☐ i. Individuals from or about whom Private Health Information (PHI) subject to HIPAA compliance will be collected	HIPAA and Human Subjects Research
☐ j. Individuals from whom information will be collected via the Internet	Internet Research – SBR
☒ k. VSU employees	Workers as Research Subjects—A Vulnerable Population

6. **Does the Primary Researcher, any Co-Investigator, or any other key person have a potential or actual significant financial conflict of interest in performance of the research?**

☐ Yes   ☒ No   If **YES**, *complete* CITI module "Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects" **AND** *complete and attach* a VSU Conflict of Interest form (available at <http://www.valdosta.edu/grants/forms>).

A "conflict of interest" may arise when a key member of the research team has the opportunity to influence the research in ways that could lead to personal gain or advantage of any kind and possibly impact the rights and welfare of participants involved in the research. A "significant financial conflict of interest" is defined as income or equity interests over $10,000 per year or 5 percent or greater ownership in a company with interests related to research results by the researcher or his/her spouse and/or dependent children. For details, see the VSU policy on Conflict of Interest at <http://www. valdosta.edu/grants/coi.shtml>.

When you have completed all required CITI modules, print a copy of your training certificate and *attach* it to this application. You may reprint your certificate at any time from the CITI website at <http://www.citiprogram.org>.

7. **Will you be observing a disciplinary Code of Ethics in the conduct of the research?**

☒ Yes   ☐ No   If **YES**, organization's name: NASW Code of Ethics

                          Web Address: http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.Asp

8. **Name and location of external organization(s) providing research participants** *(attach* letter[s] of cooperation):

Darton State College 2400 Gillionville Rd. Albany, GA 31707

9. ☐ **YES**   ☐ **NO**   ☒ **UNCERTAIN**   Does the study present *more than minimal risk* to the participants?

'Minimal risk' means that the risks of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Note that the concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk as well as risks to employability, economic well being, social standing, and risks of civil and criminal liability.

If NO, continue. If YES or UNCERTAIN, your protocol cannot be exempted from IRB review; skip to Question 15.

10. Federal regulations (available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>) permit the **exemption** of some types of research from IRB review.

If your research can be described by one or more of the categories listed below, check the appropriate box(es).

(NOTE: Studies involving fetuses, pregnant women, human in vitro fertilization, or prisoners are not eligible for exemption.)

☐ **Category 1** - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or (b) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

☐ **Category 2** - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (b) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

(Note: Exemption for survey and interview procedures does not apply to research involving children. Exemption for observation of public behavior does not apply to research involving children except when the investigator does not participate in the activities being observed.)

☐ **Category 3** - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under Category 2 above if: (a) the human participants are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (b) federal statute requires without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

☐ **Category 4** - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants.

☐ **Category 5** - Research and demonstration projects that are mandated by federal statute and are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (a) public benefit or service programs; (b) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (c) possible changes in or alternatives to these programs or procedures; or (d) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs, unless there is a specific requirement for IRB review in the statute and provided the project does not involve significant physical invasions or intrusion upon the privacy of the participants. *(Note: This category is not applicable to evaluation public programs financed by state or local government or a non-profit organization.)*

☐ **Category 6** - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies: (a) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed; or (b) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

*If you checked at least one of the Exemption Categories above, please **attach** word processed answers to Questions 11-14 to this application (Do not substitute your proposal or grant scope of work for your answers to the questions.) Indicate the question number and provide a succinct response which addresses all of the points in the question. Suggested length of each answer is no more than ½ page single spaced. If you did not check at least one of the Exemption Categories above, your research is not exempt from IRB review; please skip to Question 15.*

11. In lay terms, what are the objectives of the proposed research?

12. Describe the strategies, including compensation, you will employ to recruit participants and/or access data about them. **Attach** final copies of all posters, brochures, flyers, and/or advertisements that will be used in participant recruitment. If you are recruiting participants through another organization, describe how the process will work and **attach** a letter of cooperation signed by the chief executive or operational officer of that organization. Briefly describe the consent process you will employ.

(NOTE: For exempt research, the VSU IRB recommends against using a written consent form that requires the participant's signature if the consent form is the only document that identifies the participant. A consent statement may be added to written surveys or a consent script may be used in interview or focus group sessions. If the researcher wishes to document consent with participant signatures on a consent form, then an explanation of how the signed consent forms will be collected separately from any written data collected so that there can be no physical linking of the two.)

13. Using lay terminology, briefly describe the research methodology. **Attach** final copies of all test instruments, questionnaires, assessments, focus group questions, etc. to be used. If questionnaires or assessments will be developed during the research project (e.g., survey questions will be developed following focus group sessions), or if open-ended interviewing techniques will be used, indicate the general nature of the questions. Note that the IRB may require a later protocol modification to incorporate final data collection instruments and/or strategies into the approved protocol.

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14. Describe how you will insure the privacy of participants and the confidentiality of the information about them, including how and by whom the data will be collected, managed, stored, accessed, rendered anonymous, disposed of, and/or destroyed.

When you have completed Questions 11-14, skip to Question 26.

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*If your research is NOT exempt from IRB review, please **attach** word processed answers to Questions 15-24 to this application. (Do not substitute your proposal or grant scope of work for your answers to the questions.) Indicate the question number and provide a succinct response which addresses all the points in the question.*

15. **Objectives and Significance:** In lay terms, what are the objectives and significance of the proposed research project involving human participants?

16. **Selection of Participants and Voluntariness:** Describe (a) the participant population and any special characteristics of participants, (b) methods for selecting participants, and (c) procedures for assuring that their participation is voluntary. If English is not the first language of the participants, describe how language barriers will be overcome. As appropriate, provide translated documents. If utilizing data about human participants, describe the strategies you will employ to access data about the participants. **Attach** copies of flyers, posters, and/or letters that will be used to recruit participants, if applicable. *(Note: All attachments must be in final form; drafts are unacceptable.)*

17. **Informed Consent or Parental Permission/Child Assent:** Describe how you will implement the informed consent process. This should be a description about how you will communicate with the participants to ensure continued voluntary participation throughout the study. If English is not the participants' first language, describe how you will communicate with the participants and how you will provide an understandable written consent document. **Attach** a copy of the written informed consent and/or parental permission and child assent documents and/or provide any verbal or written explanation which will be given to the participant in lieu of a written informed consent document. If the consent process will be implemented in a foreign language, provide the foreign language script and documents as well as English versions. Unless dictated by the nature of the research and/or specific research methodologies employed in some types of social science research, the written consent form must comply with the format requirements specified in the IRB's Model Informed Consent Form or Parental Permission Form. If appropriate, a Child Assent Form written at an age-appropriate level should also be developed. If waiver of informed consent, a modification to the elements of consent, or waiver of documentation of informed consent is being requested, submit a Request for Waiver of Informed Consent or Waiver of Documentation of Consent as an attachment to this application. *(Note: All attachments must be in final form; drafts are unacceptable.)*

18. **Compensation:** If participants will receive payment, extra-credit points, or any other form of compensation or special consideration for participation, state the form, amount, and conditions for award. Explain alternate activities and compensation that will be available to persons who elect to not participate in the research, if applicable.

19. **Deception:** If participants will be deceived or misled or if information is withheld from participants, identify the information involved, justify the deception, and describe the debriefing plan, if applicable. If deception will not be used, indicate such.

20. **Research Protocol:** In lay terms, describe the specific procedures that relate to the participants' participation. What will the participants do and/or what will be done to them? Describe data collection activities, including any plans to audio-tape, video-tape, or photograph participants. If applicable, address how any communication barriers will be overcome during conduct of the research. Provide enough detail so that a lay reader will understand exactly what is going to occur in the study. **Attach** copies of all test instruments, questionnaires, and other data collection instruments that will be used. Describe how interviewers or data collectors will be trained. If appropriate, describe arrangements for referral of participants to support services or assistance that may be needed as a result of their participation in the research (e.g., referral for psychological counseling, medical treatment, etc.) If the research protocol has been or will be submitted to an external sponsor, **attach** a copy of the technical portion of the proposal. *(Note: All attachments must be in final form; drafts are unacceptable.)*

21. **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Explain if the participants will be identified and/or if their participation in the study might reasonably place them at risk for criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation or be stigmatizing. Describe the protections that will be implemented to reduce risks related to invasion of privacy and/or breach of confidentiality, including data collection, manipulation, and reporting methods and plans for long-term protection, including any methods to render the data anonymous and/or disposal or destruction of participants' data or records. (Note: Federal IRB regulations require the retention of records for three years after completion of the final report. Research sponsors or the institution may impose longer retention period that must be observed by the researcher.)

22. **Risks:** Describe all potential risks to the participants in the study, including potential physical, psychological, social, and/or economic harms. Discuss potential risks in relation to their probability and magnitude of harm. Explain the precautions that will be taken to minimize those risks. (Note: Rarely does participation in a research project carry no risk; the more appropriate statement is that risks are minimal or that there are no known risks associated with the research procedures.)

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23. **Benefits:** Describe benefits likely to accrue to the participant, or, if there are none likely, state such. Describe the benefits of the proposed research to science and/or society in realistic terms. (For example, one study will likely not identify the root cause of poor reading comprehension of sixth graders, but it *may* contribute to the body of knowledge regarding reading comprehension of middle school children or it *may* lead to a change of practice in the classroom.)

24. **Prior Research:** If you have conducted prior research that bears on the risk-benefit ratio of this proposed study, please provide a brief summary of the methods and results. If you have not conducted such prior research, answer "Not Applicable."

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25. Federal regulations (45CFR46.110) permit the **expedited review** of some types of research. A protocol that qualifies for expedited review will be assigned immediately to a review team or to the IRB chair for review. The team and/or the chair have the authority to approve the protocol without a full board review. However, the review team has the option of referring the protocol for convened review at the next regularly scheduled IRB meeting if additional input is desired. The IRB also reserves the right to rescind the review team/chair's approval if any member has concerns about the protocol that have not been addressed.

If the research project can be described by one or more of the categories listed below, please check the applicable box(es). (Note that, if a waiver of informed consent or any elements of informed consent is being requested, the research does not qualify for expedited review.)

☐ **Category 1** - Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when
    (a)   the research is on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR 312) is not required or
    (b)   the research is on medical devices for which
        (i)   an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR 812) is not required or
        (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

☐ **Category 2** - Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture from
    (a)   healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds for whom
        (i)   the amounts drawn do not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and
        (ii) collection does not occur more frequently than 2 times per week or
    (b)   other adults and children, for whom, considering the age, weight, and health of the participants, and the collection procedures,
        (i)   the amount of blood to be collected does not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and
        (ii) collection does not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

    (NOTE: Children are defined as "persons who have not attained the legal age for consent to treatments or procedures involved in the research, under the applicable law of the jurisdiction in which the research will be conducted.")

☐ **Category 3** - Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means, including, but not limited to:
    (a)   hair and nail clippings, in a non-disfiguring manner;
    (b)   deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
    (c)   permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
    (d)   excreta and external secretions (including sweat);
    (e)   uncannulated saliva collected either in an unstimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue;
    (f)   placenta removed at delivery;
    (g)   amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor;
    (h)   supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques;
    (i)   mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings; and
    (j)   sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

☐ **Category 4** - Collection of data through non-invasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Such procedures include, but are not limited to:
    (a)   physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the participant or an invasion of the participant's privacy;
    (b)   weighing or testing sensory acuity;
    (c)   magnetic resonance imaging;
    (d)   electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography; and
    (e)   moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

    (NOTE: Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing.)

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☐ **Category 5** - Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected, solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

☐ **Category 6** - Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

☒ **Category 7** - Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

26. CERTIFICATIONS AND REQUIRED SIGNATURES

(Note: Please print this page to sign. Applications without all required signatures will be returned by the IRB unreviewed.)

Statement of Responsible Researcher:

I certify that I have completed required training regarding human participant research ethics and am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks. I will adhere to the policies and procedures of the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). I will ensure that all research staff working on the proposed project who will have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting this research (including students fulfilling these roles) will complete IRB required training. I agree to obtain and document the informed consent of participants in this project as required by the IRB. I understand that potential research participants under the age of 18 may not participate without the permission of a parent or legal guardian, and in addition to parental permission, minors must assent to participate. I will not initiate this research project until I receive written exemption or approval from the IRB. I will not involve any participant in the research until I have obtained and documented his/her informed consent as required by the IRB.

I agree to (a) report to the IRB any unanticipated problems or adverse events which become apparent during the course or as a result of the research and the actions taken as a result; (b) cooperate with the IRB in the continuing review of this project; (c) obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or the research protocol or implementing changes in the approved consent form; and (d) maintain documentation of consent and research data and reports for a minimum of three (3) years and in accordance with approved data retention and procedures and confidentiality requirements after completion of the final report or longer if required by the sponsor or the institution. I understand that my department chair/unit director/cognizant administrator (or faculty advisor if I am a student) will receive a copy of my IRB exemption or approval report.
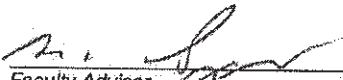
SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _27 Oct 2015_
Responsible Researcher

Statement of Faculty Advisor if Responsible Researcher is a Student:

I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks and have completed training required by the VSU IRB. I agree to provide guidance and oversight as necessary to the above named student regarding the conduct of his/her research. I will ensure the student's timely requests for protocol modifications and/or continuing reviews, compliance with the ethical conduct of human participant research, and the submission of the final report. I understand that an IRB protocol cannot be closed until final report is submitted, and I agree that, if the student fails to complete a final report, I will be responsible for timely completion and submission of the report. I understand that a copy of the IRB's exemption or approval report for this protocol will be provided to my department chair/cognizant administrator.

SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _OCT/27/2015_
Faculty Advisor

Please remember to attach your CITI training certificate, answers to applicable questions, copies of recruitment materials, letters of permission if you are recruiting participants through another organization, the informed consent scripts and/or documents you intend to use, and the data collection instruments you plan to use. If your research is or will be externally funded, please also include a copy of the portion of the proposal or award that describes the use of human participants.

Please do not start your research project without a formal exemption or approval notification from the IRB.

For additional information or assistance, please contact the IRB at Irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

15. Objectives and Significance

This study is designed to understand the experience faculty, staff, and administrators have when a coworker/employee dies unexpectedly in an academic environment. While there is literature related to workplace death, there is little related to death in an academic setting (Hoffman and Goya 2006; Carson J. Spence Foundation 2013; Clements et al 2003; Charles-Edwards 2005; Charles-Edwards 2009; Constantino and Smart 2014). Academia has unique issues in that the employees are highly qualified and not easily replaced, and a college or university cannot stop operations when there is a death. Therefore, the institution must keep functioning, with employees who are going through the grief process, while attempting to cover the job of the deceased co-worker/employee.

This is a study of discovery, not a program evaluation. From the data, patterns may be identified and guidelines for best practices will hopefully emerge as to how to prepare for an unexpected death and address a death when one occurs. Some other professions, especially ones associated with dangerous occupations, already have policies on how to prepare and address the death of an employee but they cannot be generalized to an academic environment.

16) Selection of Participants

(a) population (b)method (c) voluntarily

The survey population will consist of current and former faculty, staff, and administrators from Darton State College and Valdosta State University. Neither of these institutions have formal guidelines for addressing the unexpected death of an employee, which is why they were selected for participation in the study and not as a matter of convenience because the researcher has

affiliations at both institutions. As of right now, when there is a death, administrators must use their "best judgment" to keep the institution functioning, while addressing the needs of bereaved employees. From this research, possible guidelines will hopefully be identified to assist colleges and universities when dealing with such a loss. Both institutions have experienced employee deaths within that past ten years.

Initial participants will consist of employees, from both institutions, who have expressed an interest in participating in the research. The desire is to get a cross section of faculty, staff, and administration each as to get multiple points of view, instead of the perspective of one population. Each will receive an email, which explains the research, the fact that participation is voluntary, assigns them a number for confidentiality purposes, includes a copy of the informed consent, and a copy of the questions they will be asked to answer in the survey. The email will also include a link to the Qualtrics survey, and a request that they provide the email addresses of other Darton State or Valdosta State employees, who might be interested in participating in the study. (See Appendix A)

The reason the introductory email will include a copy of the questions and the informed consent, is so that prospective participants may preview both before deciding to participate in the study. A duplicate of the informed consent will appear at the beginning of the survey. The participants will agree to take part in the study by typing in their name and the date at the start of the survey. The participants will be asked to provide the email addresses of colleagues they believe will also be interested in being a participant in the study. The individuals referred through the initial participants will receive the same introductory email, inviting them to participate. This will assist

the researcher in knowing how many have been invited to participate and if they meet the target population.

The introductory email specifies that this is a voluntary study. One of the advantages of recruiting through email and allowing the potential participants to review the informed consent and questions ahead of time is that there is no pressure to participate. They are not required to acknowledge the email, they may simply ignore it. Once they enter the survey, they may choose to exit at any time, and request their answers not be used in the study. All such requests will be honored by the researcher. There is no compensation for participation in this study, other than being thanked by the researcher for participation.

17) **Informed consent**

No children will participate in this study, only employees of Darton State College and Valdosta State University. It will be stated in the introductory email and at the beginning of the survey that participation in voluntary. The participants will receive a description of the study, a copy of the questions, and what their contribution to the study will be. They will receive an explanation as to the reason for the research and that their responses will assist in possibly identifying guidelines for addressing the death of a co-worker/employee in an academic environment. They will know exactly what will be asked of them before they ever decide to participate. The researcher's phone number and email address will be included, if they want more clarification before deciding to participate. They will be told they will be identified by an assigned number only in data analysis and results. They will be told they may drop out of the study at any time and their data not used. They will be given the contact information for two counselors who have volunteered to assist anyone who finds the study upsetting. By allowing potential participants to preview the

questions, they will be able to decide to not participate if they have no interest or feel the study might be upsetting.

18) **Compensation**

There will be no compensation

19) **Deception**

There will be no deception

20) **Research Protocol**

This will be a qualitative study, with as many participants as needed to reach saturation (Creswell and Miller 2000). According to Mason, the most common sample size for qualitative doctoral projects consist of 20 or 30 people (2010,13) . This project will most likely fall within those two numbers unless the data points in a different direction. The initial sample will be recruited via email, of those having already expressed an interest in participating in the study. They will receive an introductory letter, a copy of the informed consent, a copy of the questions, and a link to click if they choose to participate in the study (See appendix A). Subsequent participants will be recruited from the referrals made by the initial participants.

The survey will begin with four demographic questions concerning gender, duration of employment in academia, length of time since the most resent co-worker death, and number assigned in the recruiting letter. There will be a statement requesting possible referrals to the survey and three blanks where they may list the email addresses of those they believe might be willing to participate in the survey. These individuals will be emailed with the same information as the initial participants. The final demographic question will ask if the participants are faculty/staff or administration. That answer will determine which set of open ended questions

they will be given to complete. After the researcher reads the participants' responses, if questions materialize, the researcher will contact those participants through email and ask them to provide more information by re-entering the survey and completing the additional question blank where participants can return to the survey and provide further information

The participants will not be recorded in any manner and will not be photographed. The researcher has already received training in qualitative research through course work, projects, and assigned readings. If the process of hand coding becomes too much for one person, the researcher will utilize the Nvivo software program, which she has already received training in from QSR International. QSR also offers ongoing support with the purchase of their program.

The protocol will be to download the responses, code the participants by their assigned number, review the responses, make notes, look for themes and patterns, and from there, more questions may arise. Those questions will become the foundation for any follow up questions, which is standard for grounded theory. When the data start saying the same thing or there are substantial commonalities among groups, the researcher will stop recruiting new participants. It is thought this might be 20 or 30 participants but it depends on the data.

21) **Privacy and Confidentiality**

This study presents no risks to the participants' financial standing, ability to be insured, criminal or civil liability, employability, or reputation. This is not a program evaluations, so any answers generated by the participants will not reflect unfavorably on their home institution. It is a study of discovery. Confidentiality will be safe guarded since the names of the participants will only be known to the researcher, through the informed consent, which will be on the actual survey and

not stored as a hard copy. Each participant will receive a unique number, which is how the participants will be identified in the study. Darton State College has agreed to allow its employees to participate, upon Valdosta State's IRB approving the research. A letter of cooperation has been completed by Darton State College, and is included with this application. All potential participants will receive a copy of the informed consent before they agree to participate and may choose not to follow through. Copies of introductory emails will be stored in a file on a password protected computer. The file will also be password protected. Data will be downloaded onto the password protected computer. Back-up copies of all electronic information will be stored on a USB drive and those files will be password protected. The only ones who will have access to the data will be the researcher and possibly members of her dissertation committee. The de-identified data will be retained for possible further research, generation of research articles, or generation of proposed guidelines for addressing death in the academic workplace, but those data will be password protected and accessed only by the researcher and possibly viewed by members of her dissertation committee. This information is included in the informed consent.

22) **Risks**

There are no physical, social, or economic risks associated with this study. There is a certain amount of risk that the study may cause some emotional distress, since it is asking participants to discuss their experience with the death of an employee or co-worker. The participants will know ahead of time what the study concerns and that they will be writing about their experience. Prospective participants who receive and email and do not want to participate, will not be coerced to participate. Participants who wish to drop out of the study and not have their results used will have those wishes respected. Potential participants will receive the contact information

for two therapists, if they find the experience upsetting or brings up something they wish to discuss with a therapist. This contact information will be in the introductory email, included in the informed consent, and on the survey itself.

23) Benefits

There will be no compensation for this study. Grief is a shared experience and this study will allow participants to share what they may not have had an opportunity to express in the past. The participants will know from the letter that their answers may help to formulate guidelines for preparing for and handling an unexpected death of a co-worker or employee. e study has the potential of benefitting the academic workplace in discovering possible guidelines for how to prepare for and address a workplace loss. This is a foundation study. From what is learned, further researcher can be done to identify possible policy and procedure related to an unexpected co-worker or employee death in an academic setting, as well as trainings for Human Resources and middle managers so that they will be adequately prepared when needed.

24- Prior research

Not applicable.

25) Eligible for expedited review

Should qualify

References

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Charles-Edwards, David. 2009. "Empowering People at Work in the Face of Death and Bereavement." *Death Studies* 33 (May): 420-436

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Constantino, J, and CJ Smart. (2014). "Death Among Us: Grieving the Loss of a Coworker is a Group Process." *American Journal of Nursing* 104 (June): 64C.

Creswell, John W., and Dana L. Miller. 2000. "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry." *Theory Into Practice* 39 (Summer): 124 -130.

Hoffman, C. and B. Goya. 2006. "Responding to Deaths of Faculty, Staff and Students at UC, Berkeley-An Integrated Approach." *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health* 22.2-3: 161-175.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews. Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11(3), 1-19.

Appendix A

Dear_____,

My name is Carol Ann Ham and I am a doctoral candidate in the department of Public Administration at Valdosta State University. I am asking you to participate in a study on identifying possible guidelines for addressing the unexpected death of a co-worker in an academic workplace. I am interested in the personal experiences of those in academia since the academic environment is unique from other work settings

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Agreeing to take part in this research means you will complete a written survey consisting of four open ended questions, with the potential for a follow up question. Depending on the length of your answers, the survey should take approximately 30 minutes. If you have experienced the unexpected death of a co-worker or employee in the academic workplace, you meet the target population for this study. Additionally, you must be over 18 years old, and have been employed full time in an academic setting at the time of loss. Below you will find a copy of the questions and the informed consent. I wanted to give you an opportunity to preview the questions before you agreed to participate in the study.

If you agree to take part in this study you will be assigned the number [ ] , which is how you will be identified, when your survey is downloaded. This will help ensure your confidentiality in the process. When you click on the link below, you will see the informed consent form at the beginning of the survey. Once you have reviewed it, you will be asked to type your name and the date, indicating your agreement to participate in this study; you will also enter the number you were assigned in this email. If you know anyone who might be an appropriate participant for this study, please enter their email address in the spot provided on the survey so that he/she might be contacted for possible inclusion in this research. Thank you for your consideration in being a part of this study. Please feel free contact me if you have any questions.

Carol Ann Ham, Doctoral Candidate
Valdosta State University
cham@valdosta.edu
Phone – 229-317-6895

Link to the survey: https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_3g9SH1MiNEAen7T

Informed Consent

Lead researcher: Carol Ann Ham MA, MSW, LMSW, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Public Administration, Valdosta State University, cham@valdosta.edu

Identifying Possible Guidelines for Addressing the Unexpected Death of a Co-Worker in an Academic Workplace.

Purpose of Study:
The purpose of this survey is to conduct research in the area of the unexpected death of a co-worker or employee specific to the academic workplace. You are being asked to participate in this study to assist the researcher in gaining an understanding of people's individual experiences with an academic workplace death. Participation is strictly voluntary. The object is to identify patterns in experiences that could help formulate guidelines for preparing for and addressing future losses. The goal is to have approximately 20 participants from Darton State College and Valdosta State University.

You were assigned a number in your introductory email, in order to protect your confidentiality. You will enter that number and answer the demographic questions. What will then follow is a series of open ended questions where you can share your experiences with loss in the academic workplace. There is a final blank for follow up questions that I might ask you based on what could arise from your answers or from other participants in this study. The survey should take less than a half hour, depending on how detailed your responses are. You will be contacted via email with any follow up questions.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You may drop out of the study at any time. You may request your survey and answers be discarded and answers not used in the study. The researcher will honor these requests. The information obtained from the survey will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely in password protected files and participants will only be known by their assigned number. The de-identified data may be used in further research, publications, generation of proposed guidelines, or educational purposes by the lead researcher and may possibly be viewed by members of her dissertation committee. Questions about loss can be upsetting or bring up difficult memories. If you would like to speak to a counselor there will be two available:
- Lisa Etheridge LCSW, Darton State College 229-317-6249
- Carrie Dorminey, LCSW, Valdosta State University 229-245-4337.

Survey

Demographic questions for all participants

- Gender

- How long have you (or did you) work in an academic environment

- Length of time that has passed since the most recent unexpected academic workplace death

- You were assigned a number in your introductory email, please enter it here. If you do not know your number, just leave it blank. One will be assigned to you once the survey is complete.

- Your role at the institution

  o Faculty

  o Staff

  o Administration

For faculty and staff

The survey will consist of the following questions

1. Please discuss the co-worker deaths have you experienced in the academic workplace.

2. How did the institution respond when there was an unexpected death of a co-worker? And how did you react to their response?

3. How did the unexpected death effect decision making and productivity in the workplace?

4. Looking back, what do you wish had been done differently?

5. Open for follow up question

For Administrators

1. Please discuss the employee deaths have you experienced in the academic workplace as an administrator.

2. How did you respond when there was an unexpected death of an employee? And how did your employees respond?

3. How did the unexpected death effect decision making and productivity in the workplace?

4. Looking back, what do you wish had been done differently?

5. Follow up question

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)
COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT REPORT**

** NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** Carol Ham (ID: 3680228)
- **Email:** cham@valdosta.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** Valdosta State University (ID: 475)
- **Institution Unit:** Public Administration
- **Phone:** 2293176895

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** IRB Basic
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** This course is suitable for investigators and staff conducting SOCIAL / HUMANISTIC / BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH with human subjects. The VA module must be completed if you plan to work with subjects at a VA facility.

- **Report ID:** 11069932
- **Report Date:** 10/26/2015
- **Current Score**:** 100

REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES	MOST RECENT	SCORE
Introduction (ID: 757)	08/25/13	No Quiz
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	08/25/13	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	08/25/13	5/6 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	08/25/13	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)
Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process (ID: 2)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)
Valdosta State University (ID: 746)	08/26/13	No Quiz

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

CITI Program
Email: citisupport@miami.edu
Phone: 305-243-7970
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

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Main Menu › Course IRB Reference Resource

IRB Reference Resource - Basic Course

To pass this course you must:

- Complete all 28 elective modules
- Achieve an average score of at least 80% on all quizzes associated with this course's module requirements
- Supplemental modules, if provided, are optional and do not count towards passing the course or the overall score

You have unfinished required or elective modules remaining

Your Current Score

100%

Elective Modules

	Date Completed	Score	⚕ CE Certified
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID: 1127)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	08/25/13	5/5 (100%)	Yes
History and Ethics of Human Subjects Research (ID: 498)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	08/25/13	5/5 (100%)	Yes
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	08/25/13	6/5 (100%)	Yes
Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process (ID: 2)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)	Yes
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)	Yes
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)	Yes
Informed Consent (ID: 3)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	08/26/13	5/5 (100%)	Yes
Social and Behavioral Research (SBR) for Biomedical Researchers (ID: 4)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Records-Based Research (ID: 5)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Genetic Research in Human Populations (ID: 6)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID: 506)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Prisoners (ID: 8)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Research with Children - SBE (ID: 507)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Children (ID: 9)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE (ID: 508)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Pregnant Women, Human Fetuses, and Neonates (ID: 10)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
International Research - SBE (ID: 509)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
FDA-Regulated Research (ID: 12)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes

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Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections (ID: 14)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees (ID: 483)	10/26/15	4/4 (100%)	Yes
Hot Topics (ID: 487)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects (ID: 488)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
VA Module (ID: 696)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Valdosta State University (ID: 746)	08/26/13	No Quiz	

Supplemental Modules

	Date Completed	Score	CE Certified
NOTE: Supplemental modules are provided for general interest only. You DO NOT receive credit for completing these modules			
Avoiding Group Harms - U.S. Research Perspectives (ID: 14080)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes
Research with Older Adults (ID: 16502)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Research with Persons who are Socially or Economically Disadvantaged (ID: 16539)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Gender and Sexuality Diversity (GSD) in Human Research (ID: 16556)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Research with Critically Ill Subjects (ID: 16592)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Research with Decisionally Impaired Subjects (ID: 16610)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Illegal Activities or Undocumented Status in Human Research (ID: 16656)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Research with Subjects with Physical Disabilities & Impairments (ID: 16657)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Research Involving Subjects at the End of Life (ID: 16658)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	
Populations in Research Requiring Additional Considerations and/or Protections (ID: 16680)	Incomplete	0/0 (0%)	Yes

CE credits eligibility and purchase

Please check "Action" column for either of the two following options:

"Apply Now" - If multiple purchasing options appear for a same course, carefully select the number of credits you wish to purchase. Click the course title to view on the CE information page the maximum number of credits designated for this course and your profession.

"Complete Modules" - Indicates the total number of CE certified modules you need to complete to earn CE credits. Please complete the needed additional CE certified modules to equal that number. **Be aware that test score of each and all completed modules must at least be 70%.**

CE Credit Status	Course	Category	Cost	Action
Eligible for 3 credits	Human Subjects Research Basic Course	AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™	$60.00	**Apply Now**
Eligible for 6 credits	Human Subjects Research Basic Course	AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™	$80.00	Complete 12 Modules
Eligible for 9 credits	Human Subjects Research Basic Course	AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™	$95.00	Complete 18 Modules

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DARTON
STATE COLLEGE

October 23, 2015

Institutional Review Board
Valdosta State University
2500 Patterson Street
Valdosta, GA 31698

RE: Letter of Support for Carol Ann Ham

Dear Board Members:

I am pleased and honored to provide this Letter of Support for Carol Ann Ham regarding her doctoral dissertation research.

Our IRB chair, Dr. Jason Goodner, has reviewed the research and methodology specific to her study *Identifying Possible Guidelines for Addressing the Needs of Employees Directly Impacted by the Unexpected Death of a Co-Worker in an Academic Workplace*. Based on his recommendation that Ms. Ham's methodology does not pose harm or risk to human subjects, and coupled with VSU IRB approval, she may conduct her study within the boundaries of Darton State College.

If I can be of further support of Ms. Ham's VSU IRB application, do not hesitate to contact me.

Cordially,

J. Michael Kiefer, JD
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs

CC: Thomas C. Ormond, PhD
    Provost
    Jason S. Goodner, EdD
    IRB Chair

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